

# AMERICAN THEATRE

FEBRUARY 2019 THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

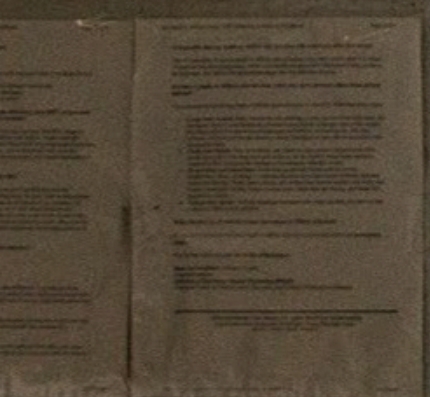
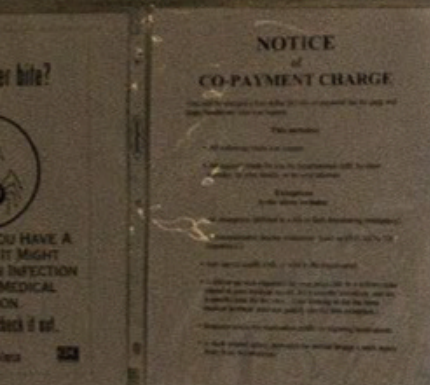
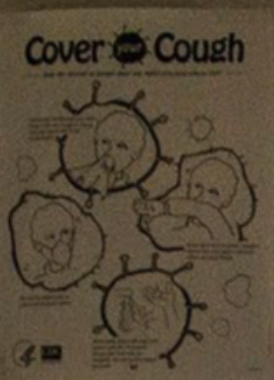
The Complete Text:  
Larissa FastHorse's  
THE THANKSGIVING PLAY

THE PRACTICE  
OF PRISON THEATRE

A Look Back at  
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PLUS:

Leigh Silverman,  
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FOR U.S. THEATRE,  
HAS EXISTED TO STRENGTHEN,  
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COVER: An actor waits for his entrance during a rehearsal of *Macbeth* at Solano State Prison in 2015, as part of a program sponsored by Marin Shakespeare Company. Photo by Peter Merts.





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**IF WE LIVED IN A MORE JUST COUNTRY, THEATRE IN PRISON—**

the theme of several stories in this issue—wouldn't even be a thing, because prisons as we know them wouldn't exist at all. It is a truth not universally acknowledged but worth restating here: Mass collective incarceration is a barbaric practice that fails by every presumed metric by which it's justified. It doesn't prevent recidivism, rehabilitate offenders, or deter crime. Countries like Norway, for instance, have shown that treating all but the most sociopathic convicts like sentient human beings with some degree of liberty, privacy, and autonomy dramatically improves outcomes on all measures. And behaviorist reforms that have been tried in some U.S. cities and states—some involving GPS tracking, some instituting certain-but-quick punishment regimes that don't require protracted jail time—point to alternatives to the penitentiary detention model that aren't just more humane to prisoners but also serve the social goals of rehabilitation and re-integration.

If the best we can say for the U.S. version of prison is that it is cruelly punitive to criminals—and this does seem to be the only reason, to our shame, that we Americans hold onto it—we might at least consider the more self-interested argument that it is also indiscriminately punishing to all who are implicated in its practice, which is to say not only prison administrators and corrections officers but all of us of who pay taxes for it and continue to vote for politicians who either actively buttress or fail to oppose it. Morally, socially, and financially, in other words, the American prison system is a catastrophe, and last December's criminal justice reform bill, passed by Congress and signed by the president, barely comes close to addressing it.

But as with many challenges we currently face, we can both work for eventual radical reform *and* use smaller-scale tools to make things better, and more human, right now. In the case of U.S. prisons, arts and writing programs can help reclaim some of the imaginative interior space prisoners inevitably give up when they enter the Big House. Theatre programs arguably add to that personal reclamation an example of positive and productive social interaction. Though these don't necessarily provide explicit models for an eventual return to civilian employment, in many cases these theatre programs are staffed by former prisoners who understand their value firsthand. If there's an understandable and urgent focus on improving the material condition of prisoners, we do them a disservice if we don't also consider ways we can maintain and improve the state of their souls, for lack of a better word.

This, of course, maps onto a larger debate about art's function in troubled times. To put it crudely: Is theatremaking while migrant children are being held in concentration camps at the border equivalent to fiddling while Rome burns? As ever I turn to Brecht, who once wrote: "In the dark times / Will there also be singing? / Yes, there will also be singing / About the dark times." I would only add to that elegant formulation the unoriginal observation that while food and medicine and shelter are what keep a person alive, art and fellowship and purpose—all things that the practice and performance of theatre offer—are some of the things worth staying alive for. —ROB WEINERT-KENDT

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Writer and digital strategist **Devon Smith** had little exposure to arts-in-corrections programs until she attended a Shakespeare in Prisons conference at San Diego's Old Globe last year. She left with 100-plus pages of transcripts, to which she added in her reporting for this issue (p. 16). She says she was struck not only by "how incredibly rewarding the work seems to be for everyone involved," but by the resourcefulness required to navigate a complicated system. "Teaching artists in these programs end up needing to rely on their skills as educators, social workers, evaluators, and fundraisers far beyond the 'typical' call of duty."



Theatre writer and professor **Eileen Blumenthal** last wrote about visionary South African designer/director William Kentridge for this magazine in 2010, when she followed his work on *The Nose* at the Metropolitan Opera. In this issue she does much the same for his moving tribute to the Black African casualties of World War I, *The Head and the Load* (p. 34). Kentridge's "non-linear and non-literal images," Blumenthal says, conjure "a profound picture of the complexity, absurdity, and pain" of his native land. "Somehow the exhilarating beauty of his work never undercuts its political ferocity. And his expressionist and Dadaist aesthetics always serve the subject rather than becoming the subject."





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**JAMES CHUNG, REFLECTING SHAKESPEARE PARTICIPANT**



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# Why We Do What We Do

BY TERESA EYRING

## N RECEIVING THE PRESENTER OF THE YEAR

Award from NAPAMA during the Association of Performing Arts Professionals' (APAP) annual luncheon, Todd E. Wetzel began his acceptance speech with a simple statement: "We don't do this work in order to win awards. We do it to create community, while simultaneously belonging to one."

His words uplifted the multiplicity of ways *community* exists in the performing arts. There are the artists who assemble as collaborators over a period of time to create something of beauty for their own and the public's growth and enjoyment. There is the community that an audience temporarily becomes while engaging with that work of art. There is the community within an arts organization, united by a mission to produce and present memorable arts experiences. There are the neighborhoods and civic entities that are changed by having the artistry nearby and accessible. And there are the local, national, and global communities that performing arts professionals form over time. These layers of community don't exist in every sector of society, and it is intensely rewarding to be a part of any one of them, and hence a part of them all.

New York City hosts a concentrated iteration of the global art-making community each January, when a plethora of festivals and conferences joins the city's burgeoning arts schedule. APAP draws thousands from around the nation and globe to attend showcases, performances, and learning sessions, while networking with friends and colleagues reinforces the extended family we can build in this profession. This critical mass of artists, presenters, and other enthusiasts gives way to adjacent festivals: Under the Radar, Winter Jazzfest, American Realness, Prototype, and GlobalFest (a one-night stand of music from around the world). The International Society for the Performing Arts' (ISPA) convening in New York comes next, and some organizations, including TCG, will follow all of this U.S.-based activity with delegations to Santiago a Mil International Festival in Chile.

I had some beautiful experiences with these layers of community during festival season. At Under the Radar, *Astrov's Lounge: Music From the Chekhov Project* brought together nine


years of musicians and composers from the Chekhov Project, an annual weeklong gathering at the upstate home of directors Brian Mertes and Melissa Kievman in which professional theatremakers and musicians "explore and explode" a Chekhov play. As they made their way through the set list, the massive group onstage gradually exited in ones and twos, leaving just a small group there to perform some of the gorgeous tunes of Lila Blue, who began composing for the Chekhov Project at the age of 9 (she's now 18).

At Prototype's opening performance of *The Infinite Hotel*, co-produced with Irondale of Brooklyn, the live filmed performance involved a good deal of standing up and taking direction, as well as some seated moments with headphones amplifying the *sotto voce* of film-set dialogue. The audience became a community by having a job to do together. Essentially, we were the extras! At one point a late-arriving attendee sat next to me, tapped me on the shoulder, and introduced himself and his wife. I in turn introduced them to my sister, who was visiting from Baltimore. After a marathon of *Angels in America* or Shakespeare's history plays, you may get to know the people sitting next to you. Why not during a two-hour interactive show as well?

Outside of traditional theatre settings, there is also the uniquely inclusive way community can be formed through performance in public spaces. During a meeting of organizations that do such work, its relative absence in the U.S. became clear, as well as its potential to change lives and positively affect our citizenry. Some of the trailblazers in bringing performance to public spaces are individuals such as Jay Wahl at Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, who presented Olivier Grossetête, the French artist, in mounting *The People's Tower*, which yielded an 88-foot imitation of Independence Hall built of cardboard boxes. It relied on community members, those who planned to be there and many who just happened to be passing by, to both erect and destroy it.

Rochester, N.Y.'s fringe festival, helmed by Erica Fee, is the only such festival that regularly programs large-scale work in public spaces. In 2017, they hosted the U.S. premiere tour of the French theatre company Plasticiens Volants and their show *Big Bang*. And every other year California's La Jolla Playhouse produces Without Walls, which stages performances in public spaces throughout the San Diego area.

When the NEA released its 2017 survey on public participation in the arts, it revealed that non-musical plays were attended by 9 percent of the population, while reading plays was at 3 percent. Meanwhile outdoor performing arts festivals grew from 20.8 to 24 percent of the population since the NEA started measuring in 2008. The economics of producing theatre in non-traditional, outdoor, and public spaces—which can be both expensive and admission-free—are challenging. But this form also offers new and accessible ways of connecting with community members, and national collaborations can make them more achievable both logistically and financially.

If you are in this performing arts world, you are rewarded every day as one who thinks about and creates community on multiple levels. You also belong to a rich, diverse, and passionate community of artmakers and presenters across the globe who want to make things happen. And *this* sense of community, of doing what we do together, is a big part of why so many of us do what we do. 

If you are in this performing arts world, you are rewarded every day as one who thinks about and creates community on multiple levels.



# LEND ME A TENOR THE MUSICAL

BOOK AND LYRICS BY PETER SHAM  
MUSIC BY BRAD CARROLL  
BASED ON THE PLAY BY KEN LUDWIG  
6F, 4M, ENSEMBLE

*Photo: Original West End Company*

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BOOK BY DAVID ARMSTRONG  
MUSIC & LYRICS BY GEORGE M. COHAN  
NEW MATERIAL BY ALBERT EVANS  
11F, 12M, ENSEMBLE

*Photo: Chris Bennion Photography*





**MARISSA WOLF BEGAN AS THE NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR** of Oregon's Portland Center Stage last September, and since then she's been on a kind of listening tour of her adopted city as she plans the 2019-20 season, to be announced in February. The move to Portland represents a return to the West Coast: Though born and raised in Connecticut, Wolf spent formative years in the San Francisco Bay Area. Prior to accepting the job at PCS, she spent three years as associate artistic director at Missouri's Kansas City Repertory, where she started a new-works festival, OriginKC. —*Rob Weinert-Kendt*

**You came up in Berkeley and San Francisco. Tell me about that scene.**

The Bay Area was a wonderful place for a young theatre artist to cut her teeth. Even though it's so expensive, I do continue to recommend it to young folks coming up because there is space to have a voice and be heard. It's not so overrun with artists that people are like, "Yeah,

yeah, move along." There is a sense of possibility and opportunity. I was there for 10 years, and for 2 of those years I was the directing fellow at Berkeley Rep, and I really consider that to be my graduate school; my mentors were Tony Taccone and Les Waters. From there I went on to lead Crowded Fire Theatre for six years. That was a moment of really being able to see how when you are helming a company, no matter the size, you get to put your money where your mouth is and really do something that makes a difference.

**Why the move to Kansas?**

For as much collaboration and opportunities as there were for me as a director and arts leader in the Bay—I think this happens a lot, where there's not a one-to-one upward path within one's own community as an artistic director necessarily. I wasn't going to go from Crowded Fire to the Magic to Berkeley Rep—that's not a path that exists. So I knew for a while that I would probably have to leave town. It was

**FEBRUARY**

**ALMANAC**

**BY THE OSCAR G. BROCKETT CENTER FOR THEATRE HISTORY AND CRITICISM**



Phyllis Frelich

**75 YEARS AGO (1944)**

Performer Phyllis Frelich is born in Devils Lake, N.D. Like her parents and her eight siblings, Frelich is deaf, and she will grow up to be one of the founding members of the National Theatre of the Deaf. She will become the first Deaf actor to win a Tony when in 1980 she receives the Best Actress in a Play prize for *Children of a Lesser God*, about a Deaf student and her speech pathologist.

**65 YEARS AGO (1954)**

On his 23rd birthday, James Dean opens in his second and final Broadway show, *The Immoralist*, written by Ruth and Augustus Goetz and based on the novel by Andre Gide. Dean plays a young Arab man who plots to blackmail a married couple, portrayed by Louis Jourdan and Geraldine Page, by seducing the husband. Though Dean's casting marks an example of brownface, the staging represents one of Broadway's first Arab characters.

**60 YEARS AGO (1959)**

Caffe Cino in the Greenwich Village in New York City hosts its first play reading. The coffeehouse will be considered the birthplace of the Off-Off-Broadway movement and will feature plays with gay themes and characters during a period in which portraying homosexuality onstage is illegal. The Cino will present early works by Lanford Wilson, Sam Shepard, and others, and it will witness an early Bernadette Peters performance.



very painful, because I loved the Bay Area very deeply and had a lot of family there and a lot of close collaborators. But I was really hungry to leap into the LORT level. Eric Rosen, the artistic director at KC Rep, asked me in one of my interviews: Where did I see myself in five years? I said, "I want to be running a LORT theatre." And he said, "Great, come here, you can train to do that."

**You weren't just working on a larger scale at KC Rep, but also in a much different community than the Bay Area. Can you compare the two?**

One thing I learned by living in those two different communities is that you have to tune your ear to the conversations that are happening culturally, politically, and personally in the area in which you live. And they are different. I was going from programming often incredibly wild, experimental work to...I knew that going to a big regional theatre anywhere, including in the Midwest, was going to mean still bringing along a body of playwrights I was excited about, but pivoting in terms of the kinds of plays of theirs I was soliciting and putting before audiences. It also gave me the opportunity to reach out to some new voices I didn't have access to before.

**You also directed a fair amount there, right?**

Yes. At one point I had the opportunity to co-direct *A Raisin in the Sun*. I wouldn't have done that with Crowded Fire, because we were doing all new works. Doing it in Kansas City, I have to say, felt revelatory. At the first preview, I had tears in my eyes. I was kind of an outsider, a new person to that community, but that writing felt directly mapped onto the legacy of segregation in that city. Every city has its own history to grapple with, but Kansas City is a bit of a ground zero for redlining and a very calculated way of creating segregation. So it was really exciting to see the way a piece like that could feel like it was written today. Black and white audiences were so responsive and engaged with the piece throughout the run—that taught me a lot about listening to where those conversations are.

**You're not in Kansas anymore—I have to be the first person to make that joke, right? Tell me a little bit**

**about your impressions of Portland, and of Portland Center Stage.**

I love Portland; my spirit has a very West Coast ethos to it. My husband and I are die-hard composters, and we attend farmer's markets all year round, so we were a bit more of the radical hippies in Kansas City, but in Portland, I would say we're just normal white liberal people. So it feels like a wonderful match. I would say that, similar to Kansas City and a lot of mid-sized cities, it feels like there's a very thriving art scene here. I've been seeing a lot of theatre from the mid-sized and smaller houses, which is exciting, because I deeply believe in supporting that ecosystem, and I'm looking forward to figuring out ways to connect and collaborate. And there's a big literary art scene here, which feels unique to Portland. We're across the street from Powell's, which is an entire block.

I would also say, it's been really interesting to begin to read about and wrestle with the city and the state's history, including its history of exclusionary laws which kept Black people from moving here. I'm thinking about the wonderful ways in which the spirit of "Portlandia" made the city so famous, but also thinking about the invisibility of some of the deeper questions around race, power, and history that I think liberalism can mask.

**You're known primarily for new work. How big a role will that play in your programming?**

A part of why I was hired was my deep love of and championship of new work and new voices. But I'm also very aware of and moved by a flagship theatre's place in its region and community. So I'm also definitely dedicated to continuing the tradition of classics and musicals. It's about the lens you bring, and about how those classics can be as urgent and vital as the new works. I am really excited about that mix. It feels very joyful for me.

I feel like one of the critical parts of my work as the new kid is to create access points for everyone throughout the season—whether you see yourself onstage or not, that there are ways in which you can engage with work even when it looks different from you or sounds different from you. But I would love to create a season in which basically all people in Portland can see themselves onstage. 🍷

**55 YEARS AGO (1964)**

The Arts Club Theatre Company stages its inaugural production, Moss Hart's *Light Up the Sky*, opening the theatre's first space, a converted church. The troupe grew out of the Arts Club of Vancouver, a private club for entertainers established in 1958, and will become western Canada's largest theatre company. The organization will help launch the career of Michael J. Fox and others.

**50 YEARS AGO (1969)**

The New Lafayette Theatre, which will become an integral part of the Black Arts Movement, mounts the second production in its new venue, *Who's Got His Own* by Roger Milner. The Harlem-based company was originally located at the site of the Lafayette Theatre, known for hosting Orson Welles's 1936 all-Black *Voodoo Macbeth* for the Works Progress Administration, burned down in early 1968, the result of suspected arson.

**25 YEARS AGO (1994)**

Edward Albee's *Three Tall Women* opens Off-Broadway at the Vineyard Theatre, the playwright's first New York premiere in more than a decade, after the short-lived 1983 Broadway run of *The Man Who Had Three Arms*, which Albee also directed. The Vineyard production of *Three Tall Women* will win several awards for performer Myra Carter, and the play will receive the year's Pulitzer Prize in Drama.

**10 YEARS AGO (2009)**

Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*, commissioned by Chicago's Goodman Theatre, opens at Manhattan Theatre Club in New York. The play will go on to earn the Pulitzer for drama, making Nottage the second Black female playwright to receive the award (after Suzan-Lori Parks, for *Topdog/Underdog* in 2002). In 2017, with her play *Sweat*, Nottage will become the first woman to win the drama Pulitzer more than once.





■ The American Playwriting Foundation in New York City has awarded **Harrison David Rivers** the 2018 Relentless Award for his play *The Bandaged Place*. Established in honor of Philip Seymour Hoffman, the award recognizes a theatrical work that explores truth. Rivers will receive a cash prize of \$45,000, and the winning play will receive a series

of national readings and a staged reading at London's Old Vic.

■ The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in Miami has announced \$37 million in new funding for arts organizations. The commitment brings the amount Knight has invested since 2005 to \$165 million. Knight also named the five winners of the first Knight New Work Miami Initiative, who will share \$500,000 to create and perform original works of theatre, music, and dance in the city. The 2018 Knight New Work winners include *Danzas del Silencio* by **Alvaro Bermudez**, *DECO "Danzon of Eclectic Cultural Origin"* by **Kevin Jenkins**, *F/Punk*

*Junkies* by **Teo Castellanos**, *G7: 2070: An Immersive Theatrical Summit* by **William Hector**, and *The Edwidge Danticat Project: Create Dangerously* by **Liliana Blain-Cruz**. Additionally, \$30,000 will be put toward promotion of the Knight New Work Miami 2020-21 season.

■ The Lark and Venturous Theater Fund of the Tides Foundation in New York City have announced the playwrights chosen for the second Venturous Playwright Fellowship. The plays and playwrights selected include *Trigger* by **Sam Chanse**, *Passing* by **Dipika Guha**, and *Incendiary* by **Dave Harris**. The fellows will each receive an award of

\$50,000 over two years, and a Production Subsidy Grant of up to \$50,000 to support a production of the play at a theatre of each playwright's choosing.

■ The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust in New York City awarded **Suzan-Lori Parks** the 2018 Steinberg Distinguished Playwright Award. The "Mimi Awards" are presented biannually to honor and encourage an American playwright whose body of work has made a significant impact on the field. Parks received a \$200,000 cash prize and a statuette designed by David Rockwell at a ceremony on Dec. 3 at Lincoln Center Theater. 📺

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Epstein

RICHARD FELDMAN

### ALTHOUGH ALVIN

Epstein was 93 when his life came to an end, his passing still seemed sadly premature. A true man of the theatre, he was equally inspiring as actor, director, teacher, and mime, though the latter function was something he was curiously reluctant to pass on to others. I first experienced Alvin's genius when he returned from a sojourn in France to appear on Broadway with Marcel Marceau. That voiceless appearance was soon followed by his performance as the verbally diarrhetic Lucky in *Waiting for Godot*.

Clearly, this was the kind of artist needed for our new theatre in New Haven, Conn., in 1966, following Yale President Kingman Brewster's invitation for me to become dean of the Yale Drama School. A shameless exploiter, I soon managed to entice Alvin into teaching our acting students, whom he transformed with his modest art and generous time. And, of course, as associate director of Yale Rep, he was responsible for some of our most celebrated and

transforming productions.

Interestingly enough, considering the simplicity of his earlier work, Alvin capped this off with his exquisite production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with its unforgettable image of Carmen de Lavallade and Christopher Lloyd, as Titania and Oberon, sliding down a wooden scoop to the accompaniment of an indelible score. Alvin had conceived the brilliant idea of mixing the language of Shakespeare with the music of Henry Purcell, but more than that he made the decision visible by putting orchestra and chorus onstage. In New Haven these facilities were provided by the Music School under the direction of Otto Werner-Mueller. In Cambridge, Mass., where the production opened as the inaugural (and almost immediately) signature piece of the newly formed American Repertory Theatre, it was accompanied by the Banchetto Musicale under Daniel Stepner's direction.

Alvin's histrionic versatility was such that he could play both the Fool and Lear in *Lear*, remaining equally effective making long speeches or remaining mute. That is why Samuel Beckett was such a perfect fit for him. It is also why his command of Shakespeare almost amounted to genius.

Certainly Alvin's *Midsummer* will live in memory

as long as memory lives. Theatre life in New Haven had always been a struggle, unlike Cambridge, where we were a triumph the moment the ART company walked upon the Loeb stage. That was primarily because of Alvin's *Midsummer*. "The theatre Boston has been waiting for," exclaimed Kevin Kelly in his first review of our work in *The Boston Globe*. Though our productions never again quite captured the same delirious level of praise, reviews were usually to remain positive and supportive.

Between Yale Rep and the ART, Alvin played more than 50 roles, while directing at least 10 productions. His *Midsummer* toured Europe and China and was quickly considered a masterpiece. But brilliant as that achievement was, it could not have been accomplished without Alvin's special spirit and personality. Some directors—Fellini, for example—achieve their effects through fear and thunder. Alvin threw bouquets. To win Alvin's favor actors were willing to put up with the most difficult procedures, not only for the satisfying results but because they might win a hint of a smile or a burst of applause from their director or teacher.

His *Midsummer* proved a testing ground for almost every actor who came through Yale Drama School, Yale Rep,

the ART Institute, and the ART. Virtually every student or company member sharpened their teeth on it. Among the actors who played the lovers were Meryl Streep, Cherry Jones, Sigourney Weaver, Steve Rowe, and Rick Elice. The rustics included Jeremy Geidt, Max Wright, Joe Grifasi, Johnny Bottoms, and Remo Airaldi. Fairies included the aforementioned Lloyd and de Lavallade, Mark Linn-Baker, and Tommy Derrah, while Liz Norment, Harry Murphy, Karen Macdonald, and Lloyd were among the court figures. I even tried a welcoming speech myself before being hooted off the stage.

But the principal player was always Alvin Epstein in his various functions, until, in his first encounter with the disease that killed him, he was forced to miss a season and, joining his sister Sandra in their Connecticut home, take to his bed to battle for his survival. That battle now has ended, and Alvin Epstein, never capable of a cliché, has literally played his last role. Not least in our memories, however, where he continues his incomparable career and where his splendid achievements will live forever. 📺

**Robert Brustein**  
founded Yale Repertory Theatre and the American Repertory Theater.





# MARIN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

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# ROLE CALL

## PEOPLE TO WATCH



JOSEFA GONZALEZ

### MARIA PATRICE AMON

**Profession:** Producer/director

**Hometown and current home:**

San Diego, Calif.

**KNOWN FOR:** As producer-in-residence at San Diego Rep, Amon currently serves as executive producer of its theatre advocacy council, Amigos del Rep. She also launched the San Diego Rep Latinx New Play Festival and is steering committee member of the Latinx Theatre Commons. Amon

directed *Fade* in a co-production with Moxie Theatre and TuYo Theatre, where she currently serves as co-artistic director.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** Amon will begin working on the 2019 San Diego Rep Latinx New Play Festival, which features a cultural celebration as well as staged readings of plays by Latinx playwrights.

**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** "Patrice has a deep and insatiable

devotion to nurturing and making Latinx theatre," says San Diego Rep artistic director Sam Woodhouse. "She is a whip-smart, detail-hungry, eyes-wide-open collaborator. She relishes asking and answering questions."

**LAWFULLY GOOD:** Amon switched from law to pursue a Ph.D. in drama in part because, as she puts it, "The law treats guilt and innocence as universal absolutes, but in reality race, class, and gender play heavily into how the law treats different groups of people," she says. "In theatre, I am drawn to stories that complicate assumptions of universality, and which challenge assumptions of guilt and innocence across cultural and social identities." She hopes to impart this message to students in her Theatre for Social Change class at University of California, Riverside. "My favorite part of theatre is introducing my university students to work that is artistically rigorous and culturally significant," she says. "I love to see them discovering components of their history they had not known before."



HOWIE SNEIDER

### REBECCA NOON

**Profession:** Performance maker/  
community arts organizer

**Hometowns:** "All over the U.S.,"

though Fairbanks, Alaska, and

Roswell and Santa Fe, N.M. were her  
most long-term homes

**Current home:** Newport, R.I.

**KNOWN FOR:** In six years at Trinity Rep, she's built the company's community engagement initiatives. She is also a

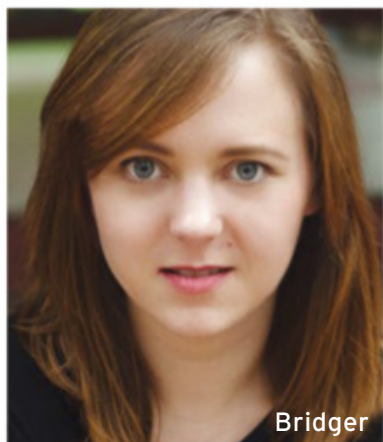
founding co-director of the devising ensemble Strange Attractor.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** With Strange Attractor, Noon is creating a piece in an abandoned Providence mill about women who worked there at the turn of the 20th century—a largely vocal performance, billed as a "choral haunting," to be performed at night. With Trinity Rep, Noon is running a pilot program at the

Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History called Of/By/For/All.

**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** "Rebecca is an incredible mentor, teacher, and artist-practitioner," says Tenara Calem, audience engagement coordinator at Fringe Arts, a frequent Strange Attractor outlet. "She thinks deeply about ways to meet local needs with artistry, and her people-first approach makes her a compassionate and firm advocate in the Rhode Island community."

**ALL THE TRAPPINGS:** Noon, who's interested in interrogating assumptions about live performance, works against the unnecessary "trappings" often expected of live performance: season tickets, scripted plays, \$7 glasses of wine, etc. "Working in community engagement within the artistic department means I can use my experimental artist self to push on the edges of these rules and slowly be part of a movement that brings live performance into new focus," she says. "I am lucky to simultaneously make work exactly how I want and be invited to influence the ever-evolving regional theatre movement."



NATASHA NIVAN PHOTOGRAPHY

### BREE BRIDGER

**Profession:** Director/  
literary manager

**Hometown:** Waco, Texas

**Current home:** Houston

**KNOWN FOR:** A longtime stage manager, Bridger began to focus on directing in 2016, with her production of *Well* by Lisa Kron at Mildred's Umbrella receiving the most attention to date.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** This month Bridger manages a small staged reading festival, "Consenting Bodies," produced by Mildred's Umbrella and hosted by Rec Room Arts, for which she'll direct Brandy Carie's *Krav Maga Play*. She is also applying to graduate schools in Houston, Austin, and beyond to grow as a director and researcher.

**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** When Bridger started as a stage manager/assistant director at Mildred's Umbrella in 2013, a.d. Jennifer Decker recalls, she was "green" but proved a quick study, and she's now "one of our most valuable members. She is intelligent, analytical, mature beyond her years, organized, and very collaborative. She allows everyone she's working with to create and participate in the process, while leading with a smart, detail-oriented eye."

**MAKE IT BIG:** "I like plays that are about too many things!" effuses Bridger, especially "plays that tackle the poetic, political, personal, and fantastic. We have a privileged place of power in the theatre: People come to sit with us for a part of their day, and they grant us their full attention. If I can convince them to be moved emotionally, that's step one; if I can convince them to act on some response to the show in the moments or days afterward, then that's a job well done."





KALEIGH RAE GAMACHE

## RÁNA ROMAN

**Profession:** Actor

**Hometown and current home:**

Milwaukee

**KNOWN FOR:** Roman's most acclaimed roles include Nina (*In the Heights*, Skylight Music Theatre), Agnes (*Agnes of God*, Renaissance Theaterworks), and Cassandra (*Vanya and Sonya and Masha and Spike*, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre). Parts she wishes she could have played forever include Maria

(*Lend Me a Tenor*, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre), the Witch (*Big Fish*, First Stage), and Jania (*Exit Strategy*, Forward Theater).

**WHAT'S NEXT:** In January Roman will return to *In the Heights* for the third leg of a co-production among Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and Cincinnati Playhouse. In March she heads back to Forward Theater to play Ella in

Aaron Posner's *Life Sucks*. Then she'll finish off her season at Skylight Music Theatre, where her Milwaukee career began, playing Lilli Vanessi (Katherine) in Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*.

**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** "We have loved working with Rána Roman over the past several seasons on wildly different projects," says Jenn Uphoff Gray, Forward Theater Company artistic director. "Rána is a beautiful and soulful singer and actor. More than that, she's a magnificent and insightful human being. We are so lucky that she calls this state her home."

**TELL IT:** Growing up with a singer for a mother, Roman has always found refuge in music. "I do this because I love it. I need the theatre. I breathe music," she says. Her goal as she progresses in her career as a woman of color is to "represent and inspire the next generation. Children need to see people who look like them doing beautiful, challenging, meaningful, and magical work. Humanity is better because of artists. We are the storytellers. We keep memories alive."



COURTESY OF CHARCOAL BLUE

## CLEMETH ABERCROMBIE

**Profession:** Theatre consultant/  
architect

**Hometown:** Wilson, Kans.

**Current home:** Chicago

**KNOWN FOR:** Abercrombie has designed performance spaces for 13-plus years and opened theatres and concert halls in the United States, Canada, Europe, and the Middle East, including Montréal's Maison Symphonique and the Hudson

Theatre on Broadway.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** In 2019 TheatreSquared in Fayetteville, Ark., will open a new home with a pair of theatres designed by Abercrombie. He is also working with Toronto's Massey Hall, currently undergoing a two-year renovation, and in a few months he will begin work on Steppenwolf Theatre Company's new theatre.

**WHAT MAKES HIM SPECIAL:** "Clem is a true pioneer," says John Owens, partner at Charcoalblue, the design consultancy where Abercrombie works as Chicago studio principal. "Deeply passionate about buildings as places where people connect and where stories are told, he uses his own gift for storytelling to engage and energize." Owens notes that Abercrombie's "acoustic training" and "real-life touring experience" informs his work, and that his designs inspire "the next generation of theatremakers."

**HOME AWAY FROM HOME:** Abercrombie has noted "a communal shift in theatremaking toward what I would describe as an expanded definition of 'accessibility.' We are making theatres more accessible for new audiences—places that feel like 'home' for a wider demographic. We are also making theatres more accessible for new artists, making them more flexible so that they can adapt to the direction of previously underrepresented communities. This shift affects everything from where we place the entry, to what form the theatre takes, to the colors we choose."



AMAN UMA

## TAHIRIH MOELLER

**Profession:** Playwright/  
producer/actor

**Hometown and current home:**

Long Beach, Calif.

**KNOWN FOR:** In 2016 Moeller received 2nd place from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival's Hip Hop Theater Creator Award for her play *A Live Mixtape*, which she further developed in a 2018 residency at California

Repertory Company, California State University, Long Beach. She also co-founded the nonprofit Up & Coming Actors (UCA), where she's written and produced seven one-acts.

**WHAT'S NEXT:** On Jan. 11 a workshop production of her play *Heroes of the West*, co-written with April Brewster, will go up at

the Long Beach Playhouse. And *A Live Mixtape* will be produced in March by Cal Rep, directed by Bruce A. Lemon, Jr.

**WHAT MAKES HER SPECIAL:** "Tahirih is a vibrant new voice in American playwrighting," says Cal Rep artistic director Jeff Janisheski, who brought Moeller to the company as playwright-in-residence. "From reading just the first few pages of *A Live Mixtape*, I knew we had to produce it. It's brave and bold writing that tackles big ideas. I love how fearless she is in finding new forms and dramaturgies to present these different 'tracks'—these multilayered voices—in the mixtape of her community."

**GREEK TRAGEDY:** "My favorite kind of theatre is theatre that represents my community, that shines a spotlight on the everyday person to speak up and tell their stories that are as poetic as Greek mythology and unfortunately at times just as tragic," says Moeller. These stories "dance between triumph and tragedy; they are raunchy, comedic, and magical."



# A ROLE FOR THEATRE IN

FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS AND CORRECTIONS OFFICIALS MAKE A STRONG CASE

BY DEVON SMITH



IVAR VONG/THE MARSHALL PROJECT

## "YOU WANT TO DO WHAT?"

It was a refrain Kate Powers heard repeatedly as she began to knock on the (digital) doors of corrections facilities throughout Minnesota in early 2017, attempting to get a foot in the door for her Shakespeare-in-prison program, the Redeeming Time Project. That is, when she got an answer at all; most of the time her outreach emails to wardens received no reply. Her calls to state legislators did eventually lead to an introduction to the Minnesota Department of Corrections Commissioner, who sets policy for corrections facilities statewide, but that meeting proved to be a dead end.

Then, by chance, while attending a conference on restorative justice, she happened to sit down next to a program director and a case worker from a corrections facility 110 miles north of where she lived.

"Kate was so contagiously enthusiastic about this program—I've been in corrections for 27 years and I'd never heard of anything like it," recalls Candy Adamczak, corrections program director at

Minnesota Correctional Facility Moose Lake. "She talked about it being an experiential program that combined storytelling, cognitive skills, and connecting thoughts and feelings to actions, culminating in the kind of experience we want to provide to our incarcerated men. She made it relevant to the men's existing circumstances and to their successful reentry into society. I'm sitting here thinking, are you kidding me? If this has been successful at Sing Sing, where Kate was a teaching artist for a decade, we have to give it a chance."

Adamczak and her colleague, Laraine Mickelson, arranged a meeting to introduce Powers to the warden. "I'm not sure he understood exactly what we were proposing to do because he'd never seen a program like this," Powers recalled, but he was intrigued enough by research studies she brought from Rehabilitation Through the Arts—the Purchase, N.Y.-based initiative that operates the Sing Sing program—on the impact of their theatre in prison program to offer the 16-week theatre program on a trial basis in the fall of 2017.



# CRIMINAL JUSTICE?

Moose Lake already had an active restorative justice program, and a group of inmates involved in that got Adamczak's initial invites for Powers's theatre venture. They included Jeff Gysbers, now a former inmate, who recalls he thought it "might be a good community-building project for us, but I didn't have any idea what it would be like. I was a little nervous. It was way out of my comfort zone because I'm not an actor, and definitely not a Shakespeare guy."

As the trial run kicked off, Adamczak and Mickelson jumped in as participants alongside the incarcerated men. "I felt vulnerable and scared, just like I knew the men were feeling," recalls Adamczak. "It's not the norm for staff to participate in programs alongside offenders, but I felt like we had to really walk the walk. It helped the men see another side of us as well—that we're all human and have

a character we have to put on while we're inside just like they do. It was definitely enlightening for us and for them."

At first, Adamczak confesses, the theatre games felt silly, but she soon saw a payoff. During a round of "Pass the Pig," she watched as Powers and her co-facilitator, Travis Bedard, tied the game play to the "fast decision-making the men might need to do in their dorms. Every activity had a transferable learning to a real-life situation."

Gysbers concurs, saying, "We were doing all these exercises, and we kept asking when we'd be getting to the acting part. But it was a 'wax on, wax off' type situation, where all of a sudden these seemingly dumb things started accounting for something."

Adamczak discovered something else unexpected. "We heard the men say many times that they're walking around in the prison



CHRIS ADAMS/CHRISADAMS.COM



Opposite page: Rehabilitation Through the Arts' production of *Twelfth Night* at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in 2016. Above left: Participants in Detroit Public Theatre's Shakespeare in Prison program at Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility in Ypsilanti, Mich., in 2014. Above right: a gathering of New York City's Drama Club.

acting every day, based on who they're encountering. This was actually the first time they could stop acting and instead be vulnerable." Gysbers even thinks of it as a kind of therapy, saying the work "peeled back the layers of the mask. I learned to be more accepting of myself and others. We encouraged and inspired each other along the way."

Discussions of Shakespeare texts led to similar light-bulb moments, Adamczak recounts. "It was clear that was opening up some men's minds to a new way of thinking."

Also new was the buzz around the facility, Gysbers recalls. "Everyone was looking forward to it—that never happens." Even the warden and other corrections officers were intrigued by the unusual program. "They would stop by our classroom on their rounds and stick around to watch the men rehearse," recalls Adamczak. "They didn't mind escorting Kate and Travis around the facility. I think they might have even wanted to participate, but that would have been outside the realm of the possible."

Gysbers hadn't seen his parents for roughly four years when he invited his dad to see him perform in a Shakespeare play at the end of the program. "You're doing what? I have to come see that," his dad told him. His parents made the long drive and his father, who "has a pretty low opinion of inmates," was "amazed at the performance. The commissioner attended the performance too, and he sat down with my parents afterwards. My dad told the commissioner how impressed he was by the intelligence and skills of the guys in our group, and that it was even something he'd consider investing money in, just seeing how transformed we were."

Gysbers rates the experience as the best prison program he's experienced "by far," and wonders why there's not more funding for programs like it. Across the U.S., there are nearly half a million people awaiting trial, 2.3 million people incarcerated, and another 4.5 million on parole or probation, according to the Prison Policy Initiative. Of those incarcerated in one of the 1,719 state prisons,



102 federal prisons, 1,852 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,163 local jails, or 80 Indian Country jails, as well as in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, state psychiatric hospitals, and prisons in the U.S. territories, an infinitesimally small number have access to arts programming in their facility.

Indeed no one is quite sure just how small that number is. TCG's Theatre Facts counted roughly 1,750 U.S. professional not-for-profit theatres in 2017; there are no hard numbers on how many are working with the incarcerated. We know that around 40 U.S.-based organizations or artists gathered for the 2018 Shakespeare in Prisons conference at San Diego's Old Globe Theatre last March, with many references to organizations around the country who weren't in attendance. From that we might roughly estimate that a hundred or so organizations run theatre programs in correctional facilities (see listing on p. 20).

Given that 85 percent of U.S. counties are home to some number of incarcerated individuals, it's likely that most of our nation's theatres are close to at least one correctional facility. In those facilities about two thirds of the incarcerated are people of color. As theatres work to diversify their audiences along lines of income and ethnicity, a growing percentage of those attendees will have a personal connection to mass incarceration, opening up new opportunities for relevance to communities. In short there seems to be great room and reason to expand this field of work.

## Walking Through the Front Door

"You don't forget your first time. I remember I was wearing this red shirt and I was sweating profusely. I didn't even want to raise my arms because then they'd know how nervous I really was."

Jecoina Vinson, first incarcerated at 18 years old, had been behind bars for 9 years before he performed a monologue for the first time. For the next 7 years, he served as a facilitator and mentor for a theatre program that had begun in secret at the Woodbourne Correctional Facility in central New York state. A few months after his release in 2013, Vinson met Josie Whittlesey, who had also worked with Rehabilitation for the Arts, and became a board member of Drama Club, an organization providing theatre training and mentoring to incarcerated New York City youth at each step of their journey through the system: detention, placement, and aftercare.

Fear of public speaking is far from the only barrier holding participants back from joining theatre programs behind bars. Says Vinson, "There's a stigma around the arts with the incarcerated populations we're serving. I hear kids say, 'The arts aren't for me, they're just using "white" language.'" Other kids "question the relevance of playing theatre games to being able to put food on the table when they get out, or are skeptical that they won't be made fun of by their peers or the facilitators. It takes time to break down that stigma and convince them that theatre is a tool that will come in handy in so many aspects of their life, from job interviews to first dates."

As a long-time facilitator with personal experience of incarceration, Vinson has a unique perspective on the many benefits of theatre programs. He rattled them off in quick succession:

**A SENSE OF IDENTITY.** "I went in at 18 and had no identity out-

side of the prison system. It wasn't until I got into theatre that I really knew who I was."

**EMPATHY.** "It allowed me to see the guards as human when I could analyze them as characters and not just oppressors. I was inside 11 years before I spoke with a guard for the first time, and it was directly related to the theatre program. It helped the guards see us as human too. The administration relates to the guys totally differently after they see us perform."

**OWNERSHIP.** "When you start to analyze character motivations, you can look at your own life with a new perspective: Maybe



A scene from Shakespeare at San Quentin's *The Tempest* in 2016.

COURTESY OF MARIN SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

I did this because of my environment, or because an event set some course of action in motion. I had a much clearer sense of cause and consequence."

**INTROSPECTION.** "I could investigate answers to questions about my values and learned to be empathetic to other people's world view."

**EXPRESSION.** "It gave me a forum to explore vulnerable emotions in a safe space, and to see other men express vulnerability. As a character, I can perform an emotion and not be seen as weak or soft by my peers. We were incarcerated at such a young age; prison is full of people who don't really know what manhood is, they're just performing what they think is masculinity."

**CAMARADERIE.** "It gave me an incredibly deep and lasting bond with the men in the program. On the outside I can call any one of the men I performed with inside and know he's going to do anything for me."

**THINKING.** "It helped develop my process of reasoning and made me think so much more about the message I might be conveying to other people through my actions."

**SELF-ASSURANCE.** "From a really practical standpoint, it played a major role in my parole board hearing. I was a more confident speaker, for sure, but it also gave me something to talk about with the commissioners on the board. They were surprised I knew Shakespeare and could have a conversation with them about him. In my release summary, they highlighted that specifically."

Vinson had vowed to himself that he would never return to prison, but realized that founding the Drama Club would mean he would have to go back inside, albeit under different circumstances.

"I was standing in front of Rikers Island and I wasn't sure I could





PETER MERTIS

A performance of *Macbeth* at California State Prison Solano sponsored by Marin Shakespeare Company in 2015.

walk through those doors again,” he recalls. “I was tremendously scared; it felt like being on the outside was maybe just a dream, a dream I had many times on the inside. At any moment I might wake up and realize I was back in my cell for the rest of my life. But then Josie asked me, ‘What would a character do in this situation? Would they fold under pressure or step up?’ So I trusted the process and walked through the front doors of a prison for the first time. Theatre helped me learn to overcome obstacles and doubts and push through the struggle.”

### Building Trust, Navigating Guidelines

While 90 percent of all incarcerated people are men, working with incarcerated women comes with unique challenges. Detroit Public Theatre’s Shakespeare in Prison program has had a Women’s Ensemble going strong for the past seven years. Program director Frannie Shepherd-Bates says she has to tread carefully, as “the vast majority of women who are incarcerated are survivors of some type of trauma. We have to be aware of potential triggers to their PTSD. We give nudges to the women, but participation is on their own terms. It takes a while to build trust with women.” Frequent interactions—twice-a-week workshops for 40 weeks out of the year—help build trust, but it’s not easy going.

“One of our facilitators always says that our process is ‘painfully collaborative,’” says Shepherd-Bates, “because no one makes unilateral decisions.” Within guidelines set by the Michigan Department of Corrections and the Women’s Huron Valley Correctional Facility, the Women’s Ensemble makes decisions over “which plays we work on, who gets recruited to participate, etc.”

One early leader who helped shape the Women’s Ensemble was Asia Johnson, who joined in the inaugural year. Recalls Johnson, “I

was new to prison at the time and scared, but I really needed something positive in my life. A few of my friends were part of the ensemble and they had been talking about it for days, so I felt left out. The fact they were willing to get up at the crack of dawn and walk across the compound in a blizzard to get to class really spoke for itself. I thought I would join the program just to fill the time and hang out with my friends—I didn’t think I’d really get anything out of it.”

Johnson was quickly proven wrong, as the bonding and emotional outlet provided by the Women’s Ensemble became a turning point in her life. “On the inside, we’re not human beings; we are a last name, an inmate number, and a case number,” she says. “What our likes and dislikes are, our hopes and dreams—none of that matters. You’re just identified by the worst mistake of your life. When you get to Shakespeare, it’s like being free for two and a half hours. It’s like you’ve been holding your breath all week, and when you walk into the auditorium for rehearsal you can finally exhale.”

That’s not to say that participating in the Women’s Ensemble was a lark. Playing the female lead in *Romeo and Juliet*, Johnson confesses she was “having a hard time emotionally because it hit so close to home. People kept asking me if talking about love and suicide was too much; at times it was, but I didn’t give up.” Like Vinson, she found that thinking about a fictional character inevitably made her reflect on her “own behavior and motivations. Analyzing characters like Othello, who have committed heinous crimes but found redemption, helped me see past my own mistakes. At the end of the play, the world is right again and this beautiful story has emerged from ugly characters. There’s a sense of belonging that came from Shakespeare. I’ve never felt so supported, like my talent meant something. The past didn’t matter. I had a future.”

The experience also turned her into a theatre lover. She esti-



mates she saw about two plays before being incarcerated at the age of 25, at least one of them on a “boring school field trip.” Since leaving prison last year, she’s been to no fewer than three plays. “Now I have this craving to see stories come to life, not just on the big screen but in intimate settings.” Another telling change: “Before, my life revolved around my boyfriend—if he didn’t like it, then I didn’t do it. Now I get to find out what Asia likes and what Asia wants out of life.”

## Generating Support, Finding Evidence

Most corrections facilities offer a range of programming to inmates, from academic and vocational to recreational sports and religious services, as well as treatment and support groups. Most voluntary programs offered in correctional facilities are volunteer-supported or managed through contracts with the state government; individual corrections facilities don’t typically fund programs directly. Given how remotely located many prisons are, the time and transportation costs for artist-facilitators is the primary expense of these programs.

Unsurprisingly, difficulty raising money for this work was a major topic of conversations among the U.S.-based arts organizations represented at the 2018 Shakespeare in Prisons Conference held last March at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, whose attendees came from a wide range of theatre organizations. Organizations gathered there reported mixed success in seeking support from arts foundations, private family foundations, funders in the criminal justice field, corporate sponsors, and individual donors.

Encouragingly, though, there is a growing field of institutional funders investing in the intersection of arts and criminal justice. The California Arts Council has one of the largest commitments to providing arts in correctional facilities, with \$8 million annually going to programs in all 35 California state adult correctional institutions. The William James Association is one of the most active foundations dedicated to supporting prison arts programs. The Agnes Gund

Art for Justice Fund is one of the most ambitious, with the explicit goal of lowering mass incarceration. Most of the major arts funders have at some point supported specific theatre programs for people in the carceral system, even if few have dedicated programs or grantee cohorts. Even social justice funders such as the Amity Foundation have begun to support arts in incarceration projects.

Support from policymakers may also help open pocketbooks. The advice from Steve Emrick, community partnerships manager of San Quentin State Prison, for arts organizations is simple: Reach out to your representatives and get them involved if you want to keep these programs alive. “The Department of Corrections responds to legislation and legislators,” Emrick says. “If you have politicians who are supportive of your mission, we will be too.”

He currently oversees more than 3,000 volunteers from 70-plus voluntary programs at San Quentin, including Marin Shakespeare Company’s Shakespeare for Social Justice program for the past 15 years. He counts himself pleasantly surprised how popular the program has become. San Quentin prisoners perform four productions a year, and the prison’s 300-seat performance space fills to capacity nearly every time. “The program has a great reputation with the men; guys that get into the theatre program are respected,” Emrick notes. “We have a wait list of dozens of names who want to participate.” One new draw to the program is a policy established in 2017 that enables men to earn reductions in their sentence for participation in approved programs, including the Shakespeare for Justice class. Men who attend at least 208 hours of programming can earn a one-month reduction to their sentence each year.

After 30 years working in corrections, Steve has a wealth of advice for practitioners stepping through the gates of a corrections facility. “When you come to a prison, understand our primary concern is for safety and security. After we ensure everyone is safe, then our focus is on rehabilitation—that’s what you can offer us. Remem-

## PRISON THEATRE PROGRAMS

Many theatres and arts institutions recognize the transformative effect creative outlets can have on those in the criminal justice system. In 2014, the Prison Arts Resource Project cited over 48 studies, many revealing increases in inmates’ social behavior and self-esteem. Here’s a list of some of theatres and projects across the country that have made it their responsibility to fight for offender rehabilitation through arts programs, in-prison theatre companies, and more:

### The Actors’ Gang Prison Project

Culver City, Calif.  
(310) 838-4264  
[theactorsgang.com/#/outreach](http://theactorsgang.com/#/outreach)

### And Still We Rise

Boston  
(857) 719-3884  
[andstillwerise.org](http://andstillwerise.org)

### The Artistic Ensemble

San Quentin, Calif.  
[aesq.info](http://aesq.info)

### Arts in Prison

Overland Park, Kan.  
(913) 403-0229  
[artsinprison.org](http://artsinprison.org)

### The Bridging Boundaries Intervention Program

Judy Dworin Performance Project  
Hartford, Conn.  
[judydworin.org/programming/bridging-boundaries](http://judydworin.org/programming/bridging-boundaries)

### California Arts in Corrections

Sacramento, Calif.  
(916) 322-6371  
[artsincorrections.org](http://artsincorrections.org)

### Children’s Prison Arts Project

Harris County, Texas  
(713) 520-7661  
[childrensprisonart.org](http://childrensprisonart.org)

### Engaged Theatre Residencies

Freehold Theatre Lab/Studio  
Seattle  
(206) 323-7499  
[freeholdtheatre.org/theatre-lab/engaged-theatre/residencies](http://freeholdtheatre.org/theatre-lab/engaged-theatre/residencies)

### Ensemble Play in Cook County Jail (EPIC)

Piven Theatre Workshop  
Evanston, Ill.  
(847) 866-6597  
[piventheatre.org/our-community/epicc](http://piventheatre.org/our-community/epicc)

### Out of the Yard

Playwrights Project  
San Diego, Calif.  
(858) 384-2970  
[playwrightsproject.org/programs/outoftheyard.php](http://playwrightsproject.org/programs/outoftheyard.php)

### Pelican Bay Prison Project Dell’Arte International

Blue Lake, Calif.  
(707) 668-5663  
[dellarte.com/about-dellarte-international/prison-project](http://dellarte.com/about-dellarte-international/prison-project)

### Phoenix Players Theatre Group

Auburn, N.Y.  
[phoenixplayersatauburn.com](http://phoenixplayersatauburn.com)

### Prison Arts Project

The William James Association  
Santa Cruz, Calif.  
(831) 607-8952  
[williamjamesassociation.org/prison\\_arts](http://williamjamesassociation.org/prison_arts)



ber, every rule exists because something bad happened and we're trying to keep you, and everyone else, safe."

He encourages artist-facilitators (and anyone running a prison program) to be highly organized, adaptable to the last-minute changes the officers may need to make, patient with prison bureaucracy, and open to developing a relationship with the corrections staff. "Your success depends on this relationship," he notes. "Check in with officers when you arrive; say hi to them, even if they never say hi back." A pet peeve of his: "Don't call the captain a 'guard.' Learn the titles, who the decision makers are, and what our acronyms mean."

Indeed corrections facilities are a world apart from a typical rehearsal room, and so are the rules about what can be shared about the work going on inside—anonymity is usually requested, not only for the sake of the incarcerated but also for their families and other parties on the outside. As Emrick explains, "You can write about the program, but we have policies about what information you can release to the public, and there will be forms to fill out and approvals to get." At times even reasonable restrictions like these can make documenting this work for fundraising efforts a challenge.

Gathering that information, though, has seldom been more crucial, as one of the most significant recent developments for corrections facilities and program managers like Emrick and Adamczak has been the push for "evidence-based" programs. These are intended to increase the impact of prison at or below existing costs, both as a component of criminal justice reform and an acknowledgement that corrections funding is rarely a popular line item in government budgets. And so Kathy Myers, reentry program coordinator for the San Diego County Sheriff's Department, encourages artists and program leaders to "collect information on all participants and get the approvals to conduct pre- and post-tests with them. The two arguments to make are promoting more positive in-custody behavior and promoting a successful reentry into the community."

Myers works for San Diego County Sheriff William Gore, who oversees one of the largest Sheriff's departments in the nation, with more than 4,200 staff, and who has developed a close relationship with the Old Globe Theatre. That's because he's seen the benefits of theatre in prison firsthand. As he puts it, "If you don't change the thinking that got them into jail to start with, you're just going to end up with an offender who can read and write." Incarcerated individuals are unlikely to make "dramatic changes in their life without new cognitive and behavioral skills."

During a keynote speech at the Shakespeare in Prisons conference, Sheriff Gore said he often sees a sea of crossed arms when he speaks at community gatherings about the value of rehabilitation. His pitch to the skeptical: "I hear people say that we should put them in jail and throw away the key, but 95 percent of our state prisoners will eventually get out and return to our neighborhoods. Doesn't it make sense to give them the ability to come back safely and with the skills to keep a job? It's not an easy sell, but I start to see heads nodding." Indeed, on average 626,000 people are released each year from prisons across the country and return to their communities, all with the opportunity to use what they've learned behind bars to transform their life—or not, depending on the programs they've had the benefit of.

The Sheriff's own staff took some winning over as well. Says Sheriff Gore, "Our deputies had a little resistance to this type of programming in the beginning too, but now they're really enthusiastic about it. Their job is no longer about just making sure someone doesn't escape; that's pretty boring after a while. Now they're excited about interacting with these individuals on a daily basis and helping to turn around their lives."

The Old Globe's first interaction at one of Sheriff Gore's facilities was a performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* in 2015. Gore remembers that "watching staff and inmates interact during inter-

#### Prison Performing Arts

St. Louis  
(314) 289-4190  
[prisonartsstl.org](http://prisonartsstl.org)

#### The Redeeming Time Project

Minneapolis  
[redeeming-time.org](http://redeeming-time.org)

#### Reforming Arts

Atlanta  
(678) 689-8263  
[reformingarts.org](http://reformingarts.org)

#### Rehabilitation Through the Arts

Katonah, N.Y.  
(914) 232-7566  
[rta-arts.org/](http://rta-arts.org/)

#### Serving Life

Hidden Voices  
Cedar Grove, N.C.  
[hiddenvoices.org/serving-life](http://hiddenvoices.org/serving-life)

#### Shakespeare Behind Bars

The Shakespeare Theatre Association  
Macatawa, Mich.  
[shakespearebehindbars.org](http://shakespearebehindbars.org)

#### Shakespeare in Prison

Marin Shakespeare Company  
San Rafael, Calif.  
(415) 499-1492  
[marinshakespeare.org/shakespeare-in-prison](http://marinshakespeare.org/shakespeare-in-prison)

#### Shakespeare in Prisons

Detroit Public Theatre  
[detroitpublictheatre.org/shakespeareinprison/](http://detroitpublictheatre.org/shakespeareinprison/)

#### Shakespeare Prison Project

Kenosha, Wisc.  
[shakespeareprisonproject.com](http://shakespeareprisonproject.com)

#### Shakespeare in the Courts

Shakespeare & Co.  
Lenox, Mass.  
(413) 637-1199  
[shakespeare.org/education/shakespeare-in-the-courts](http://shakespeare.org/education/shakespeare-in-the-courts)

#### Shakespeare in the Courts Chicago

Invictus Theatre Co Chicago  
(773) 570-0649  
[invictustheatrecoco.com/new-page-1](http://invictustheatrecoco.com/new-page-1)

#### Shining Light Ministries

Annaville, Pa.  
(717) 867-5472  
[shining-light.com](http://shining-light.com)

#### Stella Adler Studio of Acting at Rikers Island

New York City  
(212) 689-0087  
[stellaadler.com/outreach/rikers-island](http://stellaadler.com/outreach/rikers-island)

#### Storycatchers Theatre

Chicago  
(312) 280-4772  
[storycatcherstheatre.org](http://storycatcherstheatre.org)

#### Ten Thousand Things Theatre Company

Minneapolis  
(612) 203-9502  
[tenthousandthings.org](http://tenthousandthings.org)

#### Transforming Kids Behind Bars

Each One, Reach One  
San Francisco  
(650) 225-9030  
[eoro.org/who-we-are-1](http://eoro.org/who-we-are-1)

#### Voices Unbarred

Washington, D.C.  
(571) 357-2049  
[voicesunbarred.wixsite.com/voicesunbarred](http://voicesunbarred.wixsite.com/voicesunbarred)



mission was one of the most rewarding days I've spent as sheriff. I watched these people be part of a life they've never had the chance to live and to imagine what's possible when they get out of our facility."

Old Globe artistic director Barry Edelstein reciprocates Sheriff Gore's passion for this work.

"To think of the Globe as a provider of public value is to place it in a continuum with the entire history of the regional theatre movement in this country, which was conceived as a public service," says Edelstein. "In a real sense we are akin to a library system or a healthcare system or even a public utility, all of which deliver necessary services to the community. When a theatre institution like the Globe becomes more interested in the people of our city, in every circumstance in which they live, then that institution begins to make new meaning for the community. It begins to contribute to the public good."

"That's why we are working in prisons. The Globe would like to see every major American theatre commit itself to work with incarcerated populations, marginalized populations, disenfranchised populations."

Adds Freedom Bradley-Ballentine, director of arts engagement at the Old Globe, "One of the biggest impacts I see day to day is that this programming builds positive social connections for people in an environment that is highly self-segregated by race. In our rehearsal room we see how theatre brings people together who would otherwise never interact."

Along those lines, Bradley-Ballentine says it's crucial that the Old Globe's teaching artists "reflect the full diversity of San Diego," and of the inmates at Las Colinas Detention and Reentry Facility and in the yards they work in at Centinela State Prison. "It can be a powerful moment for those men and women to see that we look like they do, because doing theatre is already foreign enough for them."

It's a two-way street, he notes. "Positive role models come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. But the most important thing we do to build a relationship is establish trust and authenticity. I walk onto the yard and I see people like my brother, the friends I grew up with, my next-door neighbor. As a 21st-century theatre company, you have to reflect your community and be relevant to the whole of society, including to those people behind bars."

## Planting Seeds for the Future

For those who choose to commit their organization to this work, Candy Adamczak recommends participating in the conferences that wardens attend, and/or asking for an audience with the commissioner of corrections for your state. It often takes the commissioner being supportive of an idea for it to gain consideration, after which each warden needs to feel compelled to bring it to their facility.

"I've learned that both top-down and grassroots approaches can work," says Adamczak. "Plant seeds with case managers by attending their conferences too, and they can be your advocate inside. As

a presenter you have to sell your idea with passion and integrity. You can't just talk the talk; it has to come from the heart and be genuine."

As a corrections program director, it was Adamczak's role to identify program opportunities, shepherd proposals through a review process with the warden and executive team of her facility, and collaborate with the evidence-based review panel to evaluate the program's cost-effectiveness in achieving certain outcomes.


But generating buy-in and funding aren't the only hurdles for

potential programs; so is physical real estate inside the prison. As Adamczak puts it, "The men are craving and begging for more programming, but there's not enough time in the day for it and not enough space to hold all these activities. We have to make tough choices on which is the best program under a cost-benefit analysis."

At Detroit Public Theatre, Shepherd-Bates and her team are working to rigorously measure the

outcomes of their programs at both men's and women's correctional facilities in Michigan. While some theatre programs are focused on achieving reductions in recidivism rates, Detroit Public Theatre has moved in a different direction, in part because they also work with people serving life sentences without the chance of parole. There are around 50,000 people currently serving such sentences, and very few of them are allowed to participate in voluntary programming.

Explains Shepherd-Bates, "The environment in prison is so important to recovery. The typical negative culture inside can be more traumatizing than what they experienced on the outside. What we've decided to focus on instead is to measure the positive development of narrative identity—essentially, that participants find more positive ways of seeing and talking about themselves. They begin to see themselves as people who did terrible things and had terrible things happen to them, but they don't have to be defined by those things. We've got hard evidence that shows this developmental change, and we're hoping to see the research published next year."

Evidence-based research on the value and impact of theatre programs in communities of all kinds can't come soon enough. Jecoina Vinson, who spent 16 years in prison, says that "other than reciting a poem in elementary school, I don't remember having any exposure to the performing arts before I was incarcerated; they didn't have theatre in our schools. If we had invested more in theatre, we wouldn't end up in prison. Theatre provides a way for people to feel like they have agency, that they can say, 'yes and,' to navigate their life in a humane way. You think about the challenges of prevention and rehabilitation and theatre is the answer for them. I truly believe more theatre equals less prison." 

**Devon Smith is a writer based in Portland, Ore. She is the co-founder of Measure Creative, a digital strategy firm for progressive causes.**



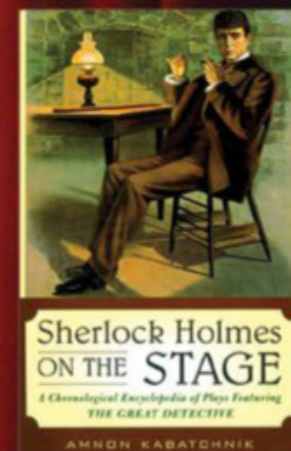
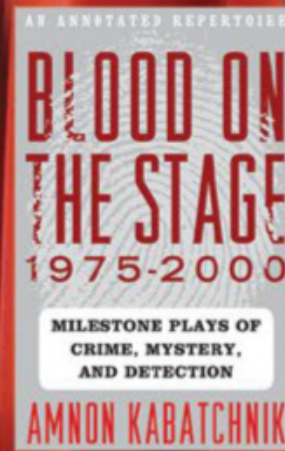
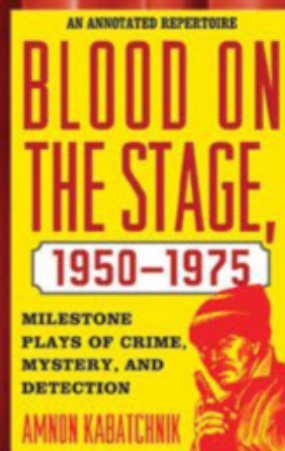
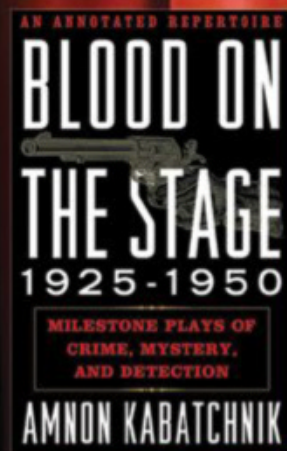
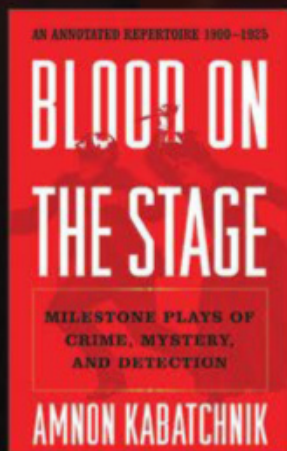
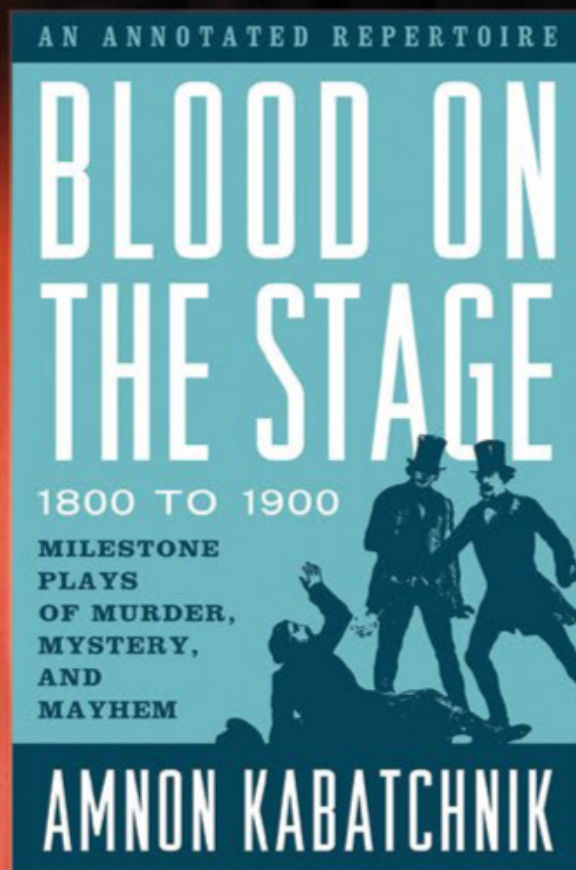
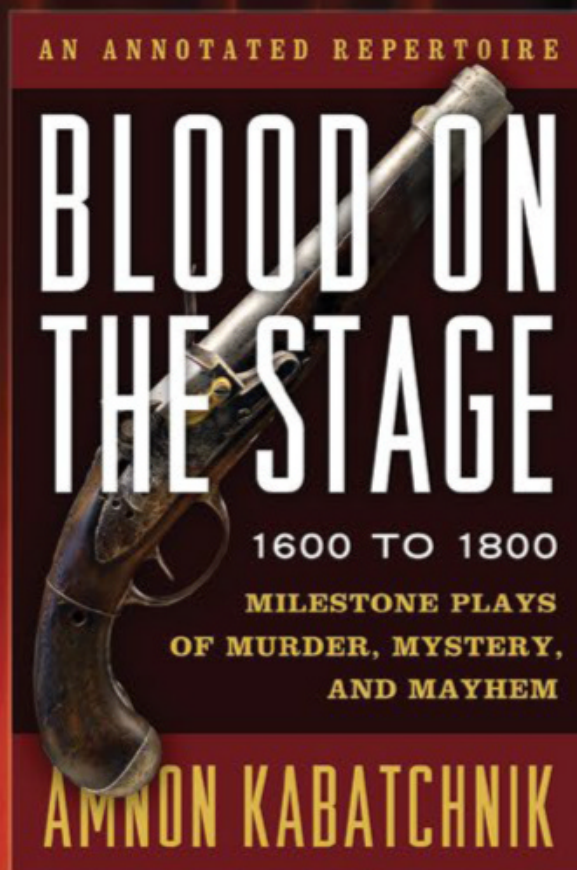
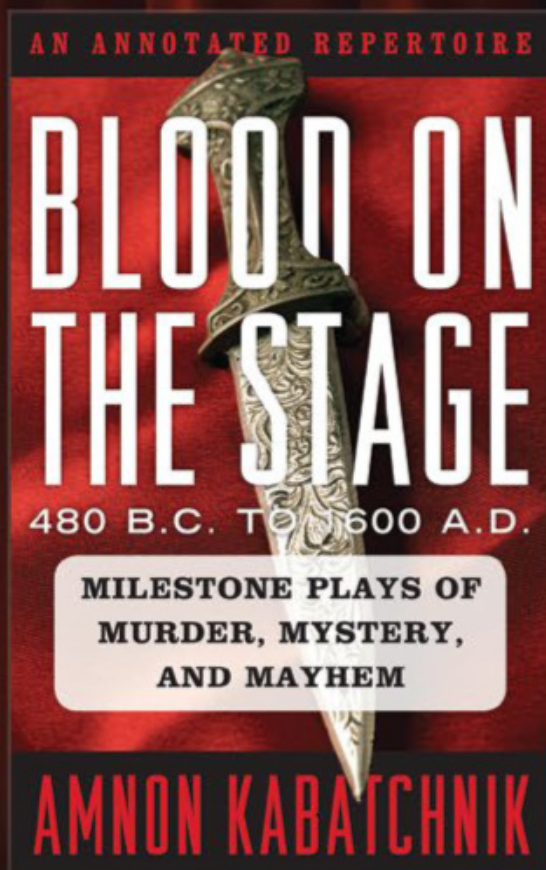
Inmates at Centinela State Prison following the Old Globe's *Twelfth Night*.

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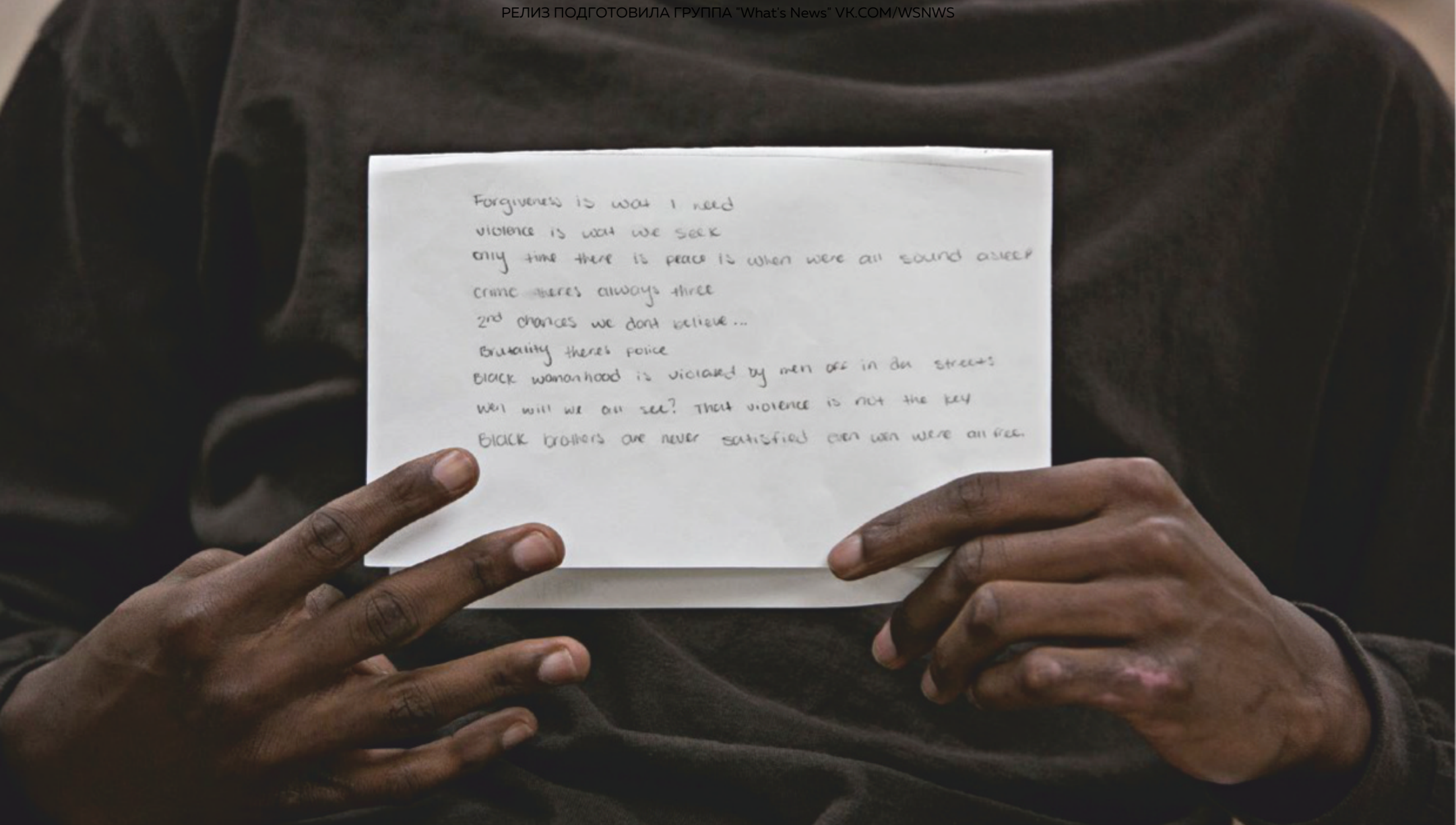
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# ESCAPE BEHIND BARS

ST. LOUIS'S PRISON PERFORMING ARTS  
HELPS YOUNG INMATES DISCOVER AND REDISCOVER THEIR  
CREATIVE AND INTERACTIVE SELVES

BY ROSALIND EARLY

**A** GROUP OF YOUNG MEN REHEARSING *HOW THE Grinch Stole Christmas* are debating how best to block the moment where the Grinch shoves the Christmas tree up the chimney. Brad\*, who is playing the tree, simply hops offstage, but Justin, the Grinch, thinks this a poor choice.

"You're a terrible actor," Justin says bluntly. Brad protests.

"Everyone is doing great," interjects Rachel Tibbetts, who is directing the show (actually more of a staged reading). The other young men onstage are playing the narrator and Cindy Lou Who—the 2-year-old girl who catches the Grinch stealing her tree—while two other young men work on a song to go with the performance.

Tibbetts reblocks the scene and it works. The guys run through it again before leaving the stage and lining up at the back of the gym.

Inside the sunny gymnasium, the boys are dressed in jeans or basketball shorts and T-shirts on an unseasonably warm November day. This could be mistaken for a rehearsal at any high school, albeit an all-male one. But then in a flash it reverts to its original

setting, and the young men wait to be escorted by three chaperones to their next activity. This is the Hogan Street Regional Youth Center, a juvenile correctional home in the city of St. Louis. Rachel Tibbetts comes here every Thursday afternoon as part of the Prison Performing Arts program to teach incarcerated youth about theatre, literature, writing, and even playing the guitar.

"I think that art has this kind of transformative power that a lot of other things don't," says Tibbetts, director of youth programs for Prison Performing Arts. "A 30- or 45-minute performance can change you."

Tibbetts describes her program at Hogan Street as "process-driven." The students watched *The Outsiders* and wrote about topics brought up in the film. They read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and discussed how it might be staged. They did improv and watched local actors perform scenes from *Of Mice and Men*. The emphasis isn't on performance per se but on teaching students how to learn.

"You're learning focus and concentration and listening skills and literacy skills," says Tibbetts. "You learn about empathy, and you learn how to collaborate with someone. We have to give people

\*The names of current inmates have been changed.



opportunities to try and grow as individuals while they are locked up. 'Cause you don't want people to go back [to prison]."

### SOON ANOTHER GROUP OF BOYS FILES IN. HOGAN STREET

Inmates are divided into three teams: Spartans, Vikings, and Titans. They rarely interact with each other, and certainly couldn't collaborate on a play. So Tibbetts has divided *The Grinch* into three sections, one for each group. In this group the young man playing the Grinch, David, has hurt his voice and his knee. Another boy in the group, Harold, who doesn't have a role, offers to read the Grinch's part. He bounds up to the stage.

The kids who aren't participating agree to be audience members and let the students onstage know if they're being loud enough. When there is any teasing—because an actor mispronounces a word, say—Tibbetts cuts through it with cheerful enthusiasm, saying that everyone is doing a great job. What's striking is the chemistry in each of the groups. The boys seem to get along, more or less, and aren't self-conscious about putting on funny voices, pretending to be 2-year-old girls, or dressing up as Christmas trees in front of each other. This may in part also be attributable to Tibbetts.

"I first met Rachel when I was in a juvenile center and she did a lot of group building exercises," says Justin. "A lot of [inmates] have this idea that 'cause we're in jail we should be doing this or that, and there's a lot of negative thoughts that we can't have a good time and get along with each other. She comes and changes that. She interacts us together, and people that you never think would do something like that would actually participate."

David, who recovered sufficiently to be able to play the Grinch on show day, agrees. "We are just being there for each other, so even if you mess up, no one takes it too seriously. You're just having fun with it, so you won't be really embarrassed or nothing like that."

Tibbetts's program creates a "safe space" in the best sense of the phrase: It gives the young men a chance not only to take a risk, but also to support their compatriots while *they* take risks. "It's an opportunity for young people who have been forced into a very adult situation, in a lot of ways, to just be playful," Tibbetts says.

"When I was a child, I was in a lot of performances," Justin recalls. "I remember when I was in fifth grade, my school performed at the Fox Theatre. Then over the years when I started following down a negative path, I forgot all about that. But then when I came here and started doing the little program with Rachel, it kind of brought me back to the other side. Like yeah, this is what I used to do."

Prison Performing Arts may be best known as the subject of a 2002 episode on the radio show "This American Life," when founder and then artistic director Agnes Wilcox was staging the fifth act of *Hamlet*. Wilcox was known around St. Louis: She'd taught at Webster University, Washington University, and founded the New Theatre. In the 1990s she founded Prison Performing Arts.

"Agnes was a little bitty woman with short, cropped gray hair, and she always wore black, right?" says Brat Jones, who joined Prison Performing Arts in 2000 while he was incarcerated at Missouri Eastern Correctional Center in Pacific, Mo. "And it was also like she was the neighborhood mafioso, cause she had this aura of power about her. She was so gentle and nice, but then there was always that tenacity, that go-getter attitude of never say no. She pushed us."

Wilcox pushed herself too, expanding Prison Performing Arts to work with juveniles, and then, in 2005, to form an alumni company for released adults who had been through one of PPA's programs

at Missouri Eastern, Women's Eastern Reception Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Vandalia, Mo., or Northeast Correctional Center in Bowling Green, Mo.

Wilcox, who retired in 2016, died unexpectedly in 2017 and now Christopher Limber serves as PPA's artistic director, overseeing the adult prison programs and the alumni company. Tibbetts joined PPA in 2005, and despite knowing about the alumni company, hadn't brought them in to perform for the juveniles until recently, in the fall of 2018. "It was a performance 13 years in the making," she quips.

### REHEARSAL DOESN'T SEEM TO BE GOING WELL THE

night before the PPA Alumni Theatre Company perform at the St. Louis City Juvenile Detention Center. They're rehearsing *Midsummer Madness*, an adaptation of the rude mechanicals' play from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Jones is having trouble remembering his lines, and everyone seems to be dragging, except for Damien Chambers.

"We need to pick it up in here!" he exclaims halfway through rehearsal. Everyone laughs. "I'm for real." It's not surprising that he's the newest member of the alumni company, having just been released from prison in August after more than a decade behind bars.

"I'm just excited," Chambers tells me later. "I'm too excited for the room. We're all out here and it's like when I was doing this in prison, I imagined doing it on the streets and having this opportunity."

Chambers remembers his involvement with PPA as a kind of lifeline. "I could be whatever I wanted on that stage, and the C.O.s or nobody couldn't do nothing. So it was my freedom that Prison Performing Arts gave me when I was locked up."

"Freedom of expression?" Limber interjects.

"Freedom of expression, freedom to...you know, in chow hall I might not say nothing to you, but we got rehearsal, soon as we come in, we brothers."

Jones says PPA changed him. "You build a new person when you let all your bricks and walls fall down," he says. In building himself back up again, PPA was "that first brick—that first cement poured into the basement to set the foundation. That's what it was for me. I gotta keep it there to keep me on an even keel."

One of the key perks of the alumni troupe: It pays. "It's really hard to get a job with a prison record," concedes fellow PPA alum Julie Antonic. "Before I even left Vandalia, Chris offered me a job, a paying job. It was the day after I got out of prison in March that I started working for them. And this is one of my strongest support systems." She remembers getting kicked out of the place where she was living, when a fellow alumni troupe member happened to call her. When she told him what happened, he said he'd come pick her up in an hour and she could stay with him till she figured things out.

The alumni company doesn't have a regular season or venue, but they perform at festivals and do command performances around town. Recently several players went to other theatre companies to consult when those companies staged plays either about or set in prison.

As rehearsal continues, everyone is certain they'll have it together for the performance tomorrow. "We come alive in front of an audience," says Antonic. "And especially this audience."

### UNLIKE HOGAN STREET, ST. LOUIS CITY JUVENILE DETEN-

tion Center, where minors accused of a crime await adjudication, feels like an institution. The halls are gloomy and the kids wear sweat suits, the women in yellow, the young men in either green or brown pants and black shirts. Staff members have a ring of keys to



get around. There are murals to cheer the place up—a pair of African American hands clasped in prayer, kids dancing—alongside inspirational posters with words like “success” and “imagination” on them.

It’s a Tuesday evening and the center’s 20 or so inmates gather in the cafeteria for the show, part of PPA’s Arts Alive! program, which brings in theatre from around St. Louis (PPA’s other programs include Learning Through the Arts and the Hip Hop Poetry Project). Tibbetts asks the kids if any have heard of Shakespeare. About half raise their hands; fewer raise their hands when asked if they’ve heard of *Midsummer*. Tibbetts explains the premise briefly, then the alumni company takes over.

Despite the Shakespearean language and the audience’s lack of familiarity with the material, the show is a hit. Kids laugh riotously at Scott Brown’s Thisbe and Antonio Brison’s Bottom as he transforms into an ass. The biggest hit of all is Chambers’s lion, whose roar somehow elicits a laugh every time he does it. Several of the teens offer the group a standing ovation.

“They were a great audience,” Antonic says. But what she was most looking forward to was the Q&A afterwards: “It was a special setting because we really wanted to reach out to them.”

“How y’all remember all this stuff?” asks one of the kids. “Sometimes we don’t!” Antonic jokes. Another asks skeptically, “All six of y’all was in prison?” The other kids in the audience laugh.

“I was incarcerated for 19 years for second-degree murder,” says Tracy White. The kids get quiet. “I didn’t want to leave the same way I came in.” She explains that she joined the Prison Performing arts program to get out some of her anger and frustration.

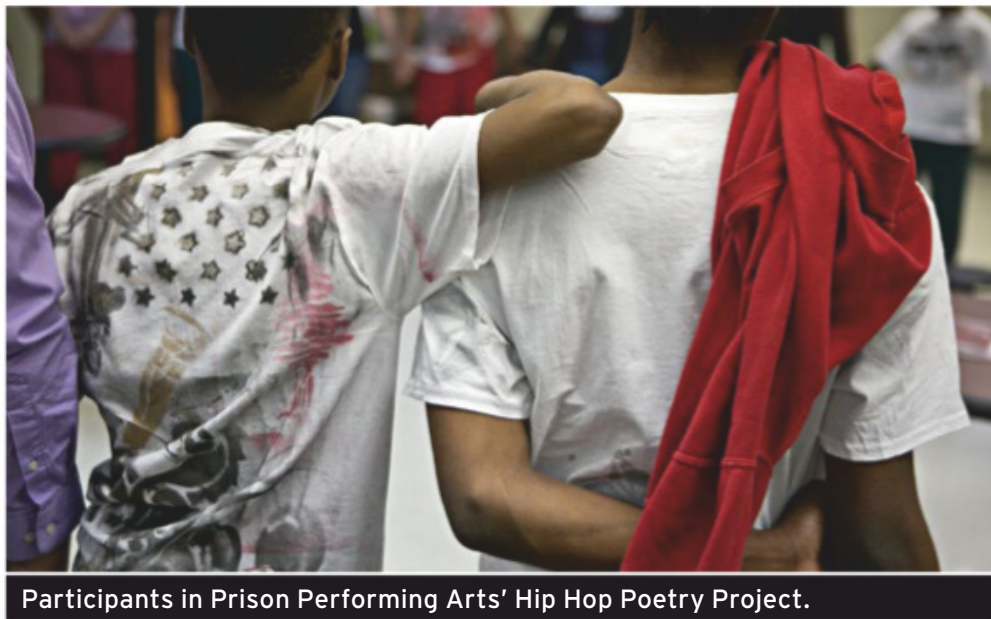
White was angry about her mistakes and about being apart from her children. “Prison is not fun at all,” she says. “You don’t want to be in there for long like I was. Being a mother from jail is hard. You can’t hold them like you want to. You can’t talk to them like you want to.” She starts to cry and a girl in the audience starts to cry too.

“This is not the deciding moment of y’all’s lives,” says Chambers. “Learn from it. Don’t be like me and wait till you get in trouble and then go right.” Other panelists echo Chambers, telling the kids there’s still time to change and a way forward. There’s a brief lull. Maybe the kids have heard this before. Maybe they hear it all the time and it goes in one ear and out the other.

Then a hand goes up. “How old do you have to be to be in the program?” one of the kids asks. Tibbetts explains that it is only for formerly incarcerated adults and he seems a bit disappointed.



Brat Jones (right) in the alumni troupe's *Midsummer Madness*.



Participants in Prison Performing Arts' Hip Hop Poetry Project.

STEVE THARP

She later tells me the same kid was so intrigued by the show that he’s started reading Shakespeare’s *Henry V*.

Tibbetts herself almost starts to cry as she wraps up the evening. “It was just so special, because it was these two groups that I work with on a pretty regular basis and everybody just really allowed themselves to be vulnerable,” she tells me afterward. “I have rarely seen that kind of reaction, where the young people just allow themselves emotionally to kind of unfold in the moment. There was something really important about being in the room with everyone.”

For the actors it was just as meaningful. “That was actually one of those times you can say you gave something back to society and tried to make it better in whatever way you thought you could,” says Jones. “I’d

like to say I got more out of it, just being able to do that.”

### BACK AT HOGAN STREET IT’S THE BIG DAY OF THE GRINCH

performance. Since the stage in the gymnasium is used to store old treadmills and weight benches, gym mats, and tables, the curtain has been closed and students act on the lip of the stage. All the teams are assembled, sitting in separate groups. There is a dull rumble of conversation that quiets down, for the most part, during the show.

Each of the groups takes the stage for a humorous and smooth production, though not a flawless one. The young men clearly have fun, and when it’s all over, they listen to an inspirational talk from Mynista, a religious rapper who talks about his mother being a crack addict and going to prison himself on three armed robbery charges. He also talks about worshiping Satan (not figuratively), then finding God. It’s hard to know exactly what the young men at Hogan get out of this. They exchange looks and laugh, but when he asks if any of them want to rap freestyle a bunch of them eagerly volunteer.

One of the young men freestyles while still wearing his Grinch hat, rapping about guns, violence, and how all of the good police seem to be in white neighborhoods. Mynista plays his own song, “Selfie.” He gestures for one of the young men to get up and the boy obliges with an energetic shoot dance.

Soon half the other young men are up with him bopping around the gym. They don’t seem to have a care in the world, and maybe, in this moment, they don’t. 📺

**Rosalind Early is the associate editor of the alumni magazine for Washington University in St. Louis and a freelance theatre critic for *St. Louis Magazine*.**



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# Nothing But Time

How a storied performance of 'Waiting for Godot' at San Quentin set the stage for collaborations between prisons and U.S. theatres

BY RUSSELL M. DEMBIN

More than 1,000 (some sources say 1,400) inmates watch the 1957 performance from the Actor's Workshop of San Francisco.

## IT WAS LATE FALL 1957 AND 24-YEAR-OLD ROBIN

Wagner was getting ready for an unusual repeat showing of a production he'd done earlier in the year, his first professional gig designing for theatre. As the performance's set and lighting designer became absorbed in preparing the light boards, he forgot all about the crew members he'd asked to tie off the cyclorama. Then Wagner realized they were still there, sitting on the scaffolding about 30 feet in the air, having completed the work and awaiting his next instructions.

"I saw these eight guys sitting up there," he recalls, "and I said, 'Gee, I'm really sorry, you guys. I forgot that you were working on that, and I see that you finished.' And one of them said, 'It's okay—we've got lots of time.'"

These men accustomed to waiting were no ordinary crew members but inmates at San Quentin State Prison, on San Francisco Bay about 20 miles northwest of the city. The play? Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, produced by the Actor's Workshop, then a young company poised to become one of the leading institutions of the U.S. resident theatre movement. And this *Godot* was no everyday production. The prison, California's oldest, had last hosted a play in 1913, when French star Sarah Bernhardt appeared there in *A Christmas Night Under the Terror*, a play about the French Revolution that ended with prisoners freed from the Bastille. Now, more than four decades later, Wagner and the prisoners assisting him were outfitting a dining hall at the

maximum-security prison to serve as the stage and auditorium for the Actor's Workshop performance.

Wagner recalls the prisoner's "lots of time" comment as typical. "Everybody was pleased to be working on the production," he notes. At 12, Anthony Miksak was reprising his role as the Boy from the staging's successful run at the troupe's home base in San Francisco. (His father, Joseph Miksak, played Pozzo, and the rest of the cast included Robert Symonds as Estragon, Eugene Roche as Vladimir, and Workshop managing director Jules Irving as Lucky. Costumes were by Jean Parshall.) He recalls that the excitement at the prison was palpable. The audience, Miksak says, was "extremely enthusiastic," no doubt "just because of the novelty of having a full-on play being produced in front of them."

## THAT A PLAY WAS BEING PERFORMED AT SAN

Quentin at all was largely due to the efforts of George Poultney, San Francisco representative for Actors' Equity Association. Poultney's other job was equally relevant: According to Alan Mandell, then business manager of the Actor's Workshop and *Godot*'s assistant director, Poultney oversaw inmate transfers among California prisons. Mandell vividly remembers his initial conversation with Poultney.

"He said, 'Every Christmas, New Year's, we do a big variety show with all the acts that are in the nightclubs'" at



San Quentin, Mandell recalls. Poultney said a number of prisoners had asked the warden, "How about doing a play?" When Mandell floated the idea with workshop leaders Herbert Blau and Jules Irving, they immediately said yes. The prison staff's requirement that any play they brought could include only men in the cast wouldn't be a problem, as they'd produced an all-male piece earlier in the year, *Waiting for Godot*.

The choice of play didn't just turn out to be novel, as the first dramatic work staged in the prison in nearly half a century and the first play many prisoners had seen. Even for those who had been to the theatre before, *Godot* was different from anything they'd ever seen. To prepare the crowd of 1,000-plus inmates for Beckett's now-iconic work about two vagabonds who wait in vain for the title figure to appear, director Herbert Blau gave a curtain speech referencing the prison jazz band that completed a set before the play. "Just like jazz," Blau said, according to the prison newspaper, *The San Quentin News*, "one must listen for whatever they may find. It is the same with

*Godot*. For each there will be some meaning, some reaction, and dressed in what we hope is good theatre." The prison audience found quite a lot of meaning, says Ed Reed, a jazz vocalist and former San Quentin inmate who performed with the band that evening. "*Godot* was pretty special," he says. "Everybody loved it."

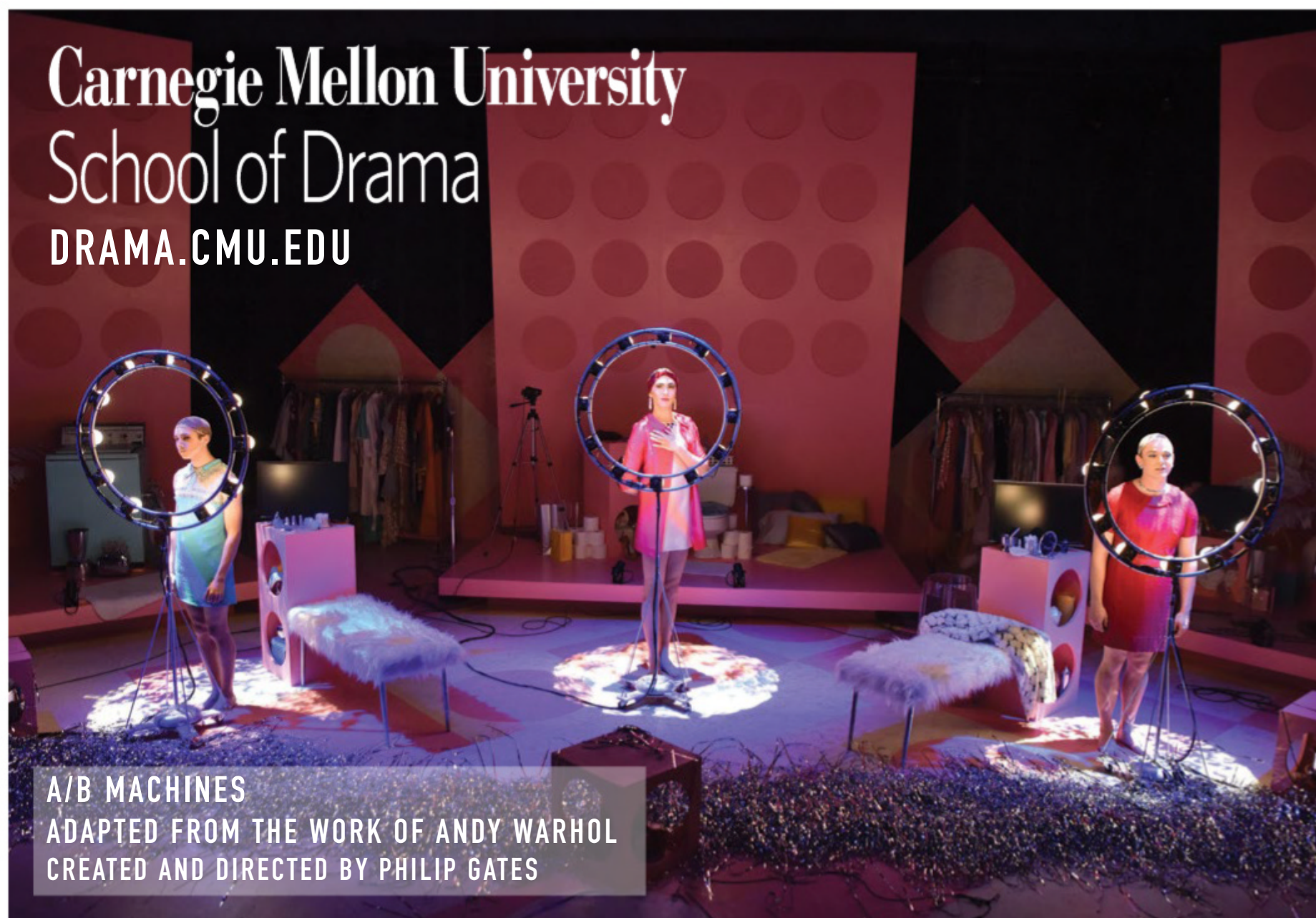
Indeed the play, which would go on to define the Theatre of the Absurd, resonated with the prisoners at San Quentin in a way it hadn't in its previous U.S. mountings. *Godot*'s North American premiere in Miami the previous year prompted walk-outs, due in part to famously off-the-mark promotional materials touting the play as a hilarious comedy. The Broadway run, later in 1956, which replaced everyone in the cast except Bert Lahr of *Wizard of Oz* fame, fared better, but still had some theatre critics scratching their heads. (A return engagement in early 1957 with an all-Black cast closed in less than a week, reportedly because of a union dispute.)

What had upset or befuddled many attendees of those stagings met a strik-

ingly different reaction at San Quentin. Miksak and Wagner recall the prisoners' highly vocal response to the one-night-only performance on Tuesday, Nov. 19, 1957. "They responded as though they were in it," Wagner says.

The tenor of the critical notices echoed the inmates' enthusiasm, contrasting earlier reviews from New York City and Florida. Whereas *The New York Times*, in its headline for the review of the Broadway debut, notoriously branded the play a "Mystery Wrapped in Enigma," the *San Francisco Chronicle*'s review of the prison showing bore the headline "Theme Not New to Cons: 'Godot' Presented at San Quentin," with writer Michael Harris wryly observing that the "surrealistic drama with no plot and no clear meaning played this week before its first captive audience."

Write-ups in the prison paper captured and extended the effusive response. The Nov. 28 issue featured three items on the play, including a cover story that proclaimed, "The San Francisco company had its audience of captives in its collective hand."





## ANTECEDENTS

The unnamed writer went on to remark, "A sensitive and compelled audience closely followed the oft-times poignant, sometimes earthy, and always provocative struggles of the two wayfarers. Even in the immense and barn-like spaces of the North Dining Hall, an almost tangible feeling of understanding and empathy could be felt as competent mimes plumbed the depths and soared to the heights, telling the story about going nowhere." The author of the publication's Bastille by the Bay column, Etaoin Shrdlu (a pseudonym alluding to typesetters' nonsense code for material that needs to be scrapped), covered the show in the column's first item: "The trio of musclemen, biceps over-flowing," wrote Shrdlu, "parked all 642 lbs. on the aisle and waited for the girls and funny stuff. When this didn't appear they audibly fumed and



Standing: Director Herbert Blau with cast members Jules Irving and Joseph Miksak; seated: warden F.R. Dickson (center) with performers Robert Symonds, Anthony Miksak, and Eugene Roche.

audibly decided to wait until the house lights dimmed before escaping. They made one error. They listened and looked two minutes too long—and stayed. Left at the end. All shook..."

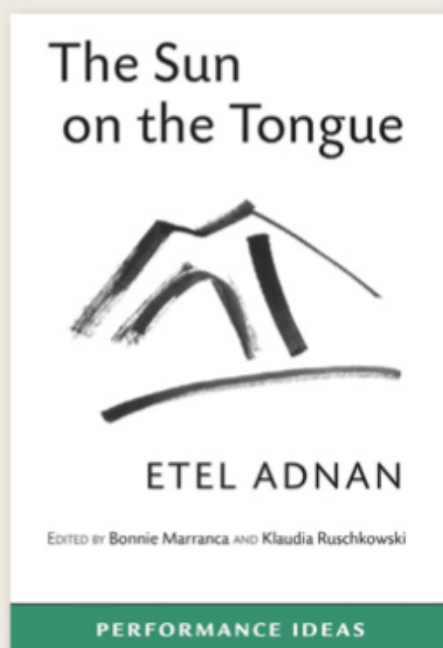
**THE INMATES' AFFINITY FOR THE** play may not seem surprising now, but it came as a surprise to many contempo-

rary observers. The 1953 work, originally composed in French by the Irish author, was then the height of European avant-garde drama, and had so far left perplexed audiences and critics in its wake. Martin Esslin opened his 1961 tome *The Theatre of the Absurd*, which defined and named the genre, with a description of the San Quentin performance, marveling that "what had bewildered the sophisticated audiences of Paris, London, and New York was immediately

grasped by an audience of convicts." Esslin's choice to open his book by analyzing the production helped secure its place in theatre history.

The production also had a lasting impact on the creation of theatre for and with prison populations. A year after the Actor's Workshop visited San Quentin, with approval from warden F.R. Dickson and guidance from

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Alan Mandell and others from the Actor's Workshop, inmates created their own troupe, performing works by Beckett and others. That group, eventually called the San Quentin Drama Workshop, was in operation from 1958 to 1965, likely making it the first extended prison theatre program in the U.S. launched by prisoners.

In 1963 *Recreation Magazine* published an article about the project by John N. Apostol, then San Quentin's supervisor of recreation, who suggested that the drama group "serves a twofold purpose." Wrote Apostol: "Not only does it provide an excellent creative outlet for the men, along with serving as a leisure-time activity, but the group has proved to be a splendid emotional outlet with marked therapeutic values. The men learn to work together and accept a responsibility toward the show they are doing and



Symonds, Anthony Miksak, and Roche in the 1957 San Quentin performance.

toward one another." According to Apostol's piece, no less an eminence than actor Lee Marvin, who served as a consultant for one of the group's productions, called it "a highly creative workshop, and the fellas go at it like a bunch of pros."

Another San Quentin recreation supervisor, John Barrie, wrote in his 1965 booklet on the prison, *Inside San Quentin...Today*, "At

San Quentin we have a house full of actors, some good and some not so good." Despite this lukewarm assessment of the workshop's performers, Barrie observed, "Since its beginning seven years ago, this group has become world famous," pointing out that critics from New York City, Dublin, and Belgrade "have acclaimed this group as one of the most creative, talented, unusual, and interesting amateur theatrical groups in the world."

One inmate on whom the San Quentin Drama Workshop had an especially profound effect couldn't attend the 1957 *Godot*. Rick Cluchey had been serving a life sentence and wasn't permitted to leave his cell at night. But he got an earful from his cellmate later that night about the show, recalling in a 2015 interview with Beckett scholar Rhys Tranter how his cellmate told him about the bombastic Pozzo

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## ANTECEDENTS

and his slave, whom Vladimir and Estragon encounter while waiting. "Guess what the guy-whipping dude called him?" Cluchey's cellmate said, adding, "*Lucky*." Cluchey, all too aware of the irony, identified with the character, even described secondhand. "Warden had a rope 'round [my neck] too," he told Tranter.

The San Quentin Drama Workshop helped loosen that rope. While Cluchey wasn't involved at the very beginning (though he's often credited with co-founding the group), he was interested right away and joined for the company's fourth production. He soon became a driving force in the workshop, which ultimately contributed to his release in 1966. Cluchey, whose story would later inspire the 1987 Nick Nolte film *Weeds*, became personal friends with Beckett and a leading interpreter of his work. He founded the Barbwire Theater, a company that featured a number of former inmates, and in 1970 toured U.S. carceral institutions performing his play *The Cage*, a play he wrote and first staged at San Quentin. He later adopted the San Quentin Drama Work-

shop name for his own producing efforts until his death in 2015.

**THE SAN QUENTIN GODOT WASN'T** the first prison *Godot*: In 1953, the same year as the play's Paris and Berlin premieres, inmates at Lüttringhausen Prison near Düsseldorf presented an unauthorized German translation. (*Godot* at Lüttringhausen is discussed in *The Impossible Itself*, a 2010 documentary on the 1957 San Quentin performance.) But the high-profile reception of the San Quentin performance helped it become influential, both in the U.S. and internationally. In 1985 Jan Jönson staged *Godot* with inmates at Kumla, a maximum-security prison in Sweden, and then, encouraged by Beckett himself, Jönson worked with prisoners on *Godot* at San Quentin in 1988. Since 2003, Marin Shakespeare Company has been working with prisoners there.

The original program's inspiration, as Miksak points out, was rooted in the Actor's Workshop's "background of socialism, communism, working-class—a theatre of the people. An extension of that would be going to a

prison and performing for the most oppressed. Clearly there was a social component to it too—that these people deserved some art, some contact, and some culture, and deserved to be considered part of the citizenry."

The 1957 *Godot* "first and foremost suggested that prison residents were worthy of experiencing performance," concurs Jodi Jinks, who established the Oklahoma-based ArtsAloud prison program as an extension of her work with Rude Mechs in Austin. "The fact that a performance took place at all has had enormous impact on prison theatre programs like mine that have followed. In addition, it was not just *any* performance, but a play that mirrored the absurdities of life—a life incapable of understanding, a life of senseless routine, oppression, and existential angst."

Making theatre, then as now, can be a powerful antidote to meaninglessness. As Jinks puts it, "Ultimately theatre continues to do what it does best: Ask questions and poke at answers. The 1957 performance of *Waiting for Godot* in San Quentin distilled both." Hardly nothing to be done. 📺



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# Carry That Weight

William Kentridge's epic  
'The Head and the Load' honored  
the million-plus Black Africans  
dead in World War I

BY EILEEN BLUMENTHAL

Nhlanhla Mahlangu in *The Head and the Load* at Park Avenue Armory in New York City.

STEPHANIE BERGER

They are not men because they have no names  
They are not soldiers because they have no numbers  
They are not to be called but counted

—From *The Head and the Load*, quoting a Portuguese World War I soldier about Africans in that war

**IN FACT, THE NUMBER OF NATIVE AFRICANS** killed in the so-called Great War cannot even be counted, only estimated, because so few records were kept about them. African civilians who died because their European colonial rulers were adversaries likely number a million. In addition, perhaps 30,000 combatants and 300,000 impressed “carriers,” human beasts of burden, lost their lives. European troops literally worked these porters to death, even receiving such guidelines as “after 20 days, the carriers are of no use.”

Ignored in the history books, these unnamed casualties and their abuse by colonialists were the focus of South African artist/director William Kentridge's riveting, huge-scale work, *The Head and the Load*, at Park Avenue Armory last December. This 90-minute *gesamtkunstwerk*—theatre, opera, dance, art installation, and Dadaist event—came to life on a stage that was 180 feet long (more than half the length of a football field), 40 feet high, and 32 feet deep, constructed specially at the Armory. Nearly 50 actors, musicians, and dancers created evolving images and soundscapes, with so much simultaneous action on such a long stage that it was impossible to take it all in. But all the elements came together into a blistering—and bizarrely exhilarating—presentation of Europe's colonial imposition on Africa as not only barbaric and catastrophic but also sense-shatteringly absurd.

The gigantic back wall, covered with military tarp, was a canvas for projections of Kentridge's stunning, shifting images. Many were his signature charcoal drawings and low-tech animations, shot frame by frame as he drew, rubbed out, and redrew. These pictures ranged from stage-wide junglescapes (or goldmine-blasted vistas or dark fields dotted with white crosses), to mammoth closeups of bandaged or broken heads, to a gallery of lovely birds, soon shot to bits. Other projections showed chalk-on-blackboard maps of Africa or colored atlas maps cut up with scissors and rearranged, much as the colonial powers wrestled to reorder their cash-cow African “possessions.” (Germany's territories were distributed to the victors after the war.)

Some of the most startling images were shadows of the onstage performers that expanded from near life-size to gigantic as the people casting them moved closer to or farther from strong lights between the audience and the stage. At times, these shadows mixed with filmed projections to create complex, overlapping pictures. One such scene showed a seemingly infinite procession of 20- to 30-foot-high figures (the live performers circled back and rejoined the trek again and again) on Kentridge's changing landscape. Primarily carriers, the procession also included soldiers, brass players, and others. Just above their heads the performers



held large, unreadable cutouts, which when silhouetted on the wall reveal as mainly war machinery: cannons, vintage airplanes, assortments of gears, pipes, wood, and miscellany.

One pair of “carriers” lugged a full ship: Two warships actually were dismantled in Cape Town and moved, ultimately by human beasts of burden, more than 1,900 miles to Lake Tanganyika. Some of the cutouts created giant portraits of anti-colonialist leaders of the period, including John Chilembwe of Nyasaland, whose eloquent letter pleading for decency was included in the show. By the end of the procession, the loads were tattered, the giant portraits broken and bandaged. Finally the landscape disappeared and we saw, instead, a 180' x 40' multi-column list, apparently of the dead.

**THOUGH KENTRIDGE CONCEIVED** and directed *The Head and the Load*, the piece was the joint creation of many artists with different specialties. “My real talent,” Kentridge told me recently, “is finding great collaborators.” In fact he has nurtured a series of deep working relationships, some going back a quarter century. Nearly all of the artists he works with have impressive careers apart from their work with him, but they also at times subordinate their independent work to his vision to be part of his creative process.

Even Kentridge’s projections and animated films, as he is quick to acknowledge, owe much to his close collaboration with Catherine Meyburgh. A South African TV and film director, she has worked with Kentridge since the mid-1990s on virtually all of his animated films as well as his live theatre and opera projects. Typically, Meyburgh says, Kentridge shows her his very early drawings for a project. Being the first to see his images, she says, still is exciting, still feels like a privilege.

Next they start to discuss possible narratives or structures, and she may make suggestions for additional drawings. In *The Head and the Load*, for example, it was she who suggested that Kentridge draw mosquitos and other insects—part of the general torment and disease vectors for the carriers. (The show included 40-foot-high mosquitos and fleas.) She also suggested the gallery of a dozen or more different birds, which were then blown apart. In the later phases of the process, Meyburgh and Kentridge discuss the arrangement of the

drawn and filmed elements. For *The Head and the Load*, she also worked with technicians to make the images on the back wall appear sharp and undistorted despite using projectors at below-stage height only a few feet from the stage.

Kentridge began the intense phase of work on *The Head and the Load* with an 8-day workshop in November 2016 in his large, downtown studio in Johannesburg. About 60 artists participated, including the key members of his creative team—composers, a choreographer, designers, actors, singers, dancers, instrumental musicians, and his longtime associate director, Luc DeWit. Everyone already knew the basic territory he wanted to explore: war and its unspeakable destruction of human life, specifically in WWI Africa. The focus very soon came to include the misunderstandings and miscommunications that arise as disparate cultures attempt to interface, and the inherently crazy dynamics of colonialism becoming amplified under the pressure of war.

Kentridge hoped to present this reality without reducing it either to the narra-

tive of one person (or a few people) or using a lecture format as a substitute for narrative. He wanted to find ways to express this content without distorting it into a comforting illusion of logic, of making sense. His idea was to create the work as pure collage. It was something he had never done before, though some of his films have come close.

The 2016 workshop in Johannesburg was not starting entirely from scratch. Kentridge saw *The Head and the Load* as coming directly out of his two most recent large projects. His production of Berg’s opera *Wozzeck*, which played at the Salzburg Festival in 2017 and comes to the New York’s Metropolitan Opera in 2019-20, was filled with projected drawings of the destruction of war: gigantic bandaged or dead-looking heads, devastated landscapes. These presumably were the memories or the imagined terrors of the soldier Wozzeck.

The other direct predecessor for Kentridge was his 2016 *Triumphs and Laments*, a 550-meter-long frieze on a section of wall along Rome’s Tiber River, created by power-washing away hundreds of years of grime

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around the giant stencils he had made, leaving images, some 12 meters high, made of the remaining grime. (Two years later, the pictures are fading, but still clearly visible.) *Triumphs and Laments* had also dealt with war's winners and losers. And its gargantuan size, Kentridge says, made the 180-foot-long Armory stage seem like a manageable miniature by comparison. Perhaps most importantly, the opening ceremonies for *Triumphs and Laments* included a vast procession of shadow images, a seemingly endless stream of people. This was an element Kentridge knew he wanted to be central to his new work on Africa in World War I.

Some of the collaborating artists brought specific ideas to the workshop, including scenes developed (and used or not used) in previous work. The composers had created a progressively disintegrating vocal version of "God Save the King." The choreographer and a dancer brought a scene in which one person is both physically supporting and slapping someone who is sick or wounded—a strange, disturbing mixture, for Kentridge, "of violence and tenderness." At the end of the workshop, Kentridge recalled, they had a core of material, "about 15 nuggets," to be played with, developed, transformed, or discarded. From that point on, ideas flowed, even though the artists were, in some cases, geographically far apart.

**INSOFAR AS THE HEAD AND THE** *Load* could be classified it all, it could well be called an opera. The musical score and soundscape by South African composer Philip Miller, with co-composer Thuthuka Sibisi, was developed contemporaneously with—sometimes even ahead of—the visual and other elements. Collaboration is a well-honed process for these artists: Kentridge and Miller have worked together since 1994. And Sibisi, who has been Miller's musical director for several productions, had been musical director for *Triumphs and Laments*. They also worked with the Knights, a New York-based experimental orchestral collective, several of whose members were in the show. In fact the music was so central to *The Head and The Load* that in rehearsal Kentridge would usually ask performers to start a scene "from Bar 24," for example, as conductors do.

Miller and Sibisi's tour-de-force vocal and instrumental score partly recalled early



William Kentridge

MARC SHOUL

20th-century European music, and quoted motifs, even long sections, from Schoenberg, Hindemith, and others. But Western melodies and harmonies continually conversed, interfaced, melded, and clashed with music more like that of Southern and Western Africa. The long *a cappella* rendition of "God Save The King" that wound up in the show started with rich, opera-trained voices of South African Black singers in a multipart chorus. But it soon began to fracture and to syncopate into complex rhythms. As the back wall showed fragments of wounded African faces, the music became a lament, and dissonant undertones invaded, like a sour fog-horn mixed with something like the rumble elephants must hear before an earthquake. When singers reprised the opening lines, their voices gave out mid-syllable.

Individual musicians also navigated among and straddled musical worlds. For example, the South African opera and gospel star Ann Masina slid seamlessly, with her powerful, gorgeous voice, among Western music, including "God Save..." and Erik Satie's waltz "Je te veux," and African ululation, traditional South African call-and-response, and rhythmic chanting and howling composed by Miller.

Even the instruments played outside their traditional zones: Drumsticks tapped the strings of a double bass to create the tut-tut-tut of artillery fire; brass players breathed into their instruments to produce eerie, hollow sounds, as if a person, or the world, was straining to keep alive. Human voices wailed sirens or sang the whistle of shells arcing their way down.

Among the piano, strings, brass, and African drums was a stately, four-and-half-foot-tall *kora*, a West African lute-harp with 21 strings and a large, decorated calabash-gourd sound chamber. N'Faly Kouyaté, a master kora player from Guinea, blended and interacted with the Western-ish musical ensemble. One traditional use of the kora is to accompany a narrative. During the entire great procession, Kouyaté stood to one side, his giant shadow facing the other figures, and his singing and playing seemed to recount the history unrolling before us. Meanwhile other Western and African music and sculpted noise underscored the action.

South African choreographer Gregory Maqoma's dance for *The Head and the Load* developed alongside the story and the music. Often it created interplays among the traditional, the colonial-influenced, and the colonial. One piece started with a South African *Pedi* dance, whose exaggerated, exuberant stamping may have been created by returning World War I forced recruits. The dancers' shadows rhythmically grew huge and retracted as they moved up- and down-stage, then the scene grew ominously near-silent, as if they had been deafened by blasts. Eventually their stamping was squashed into military marching.

Another long sequence near the end of the show came from the idea Maqoma brought to the original workshop, of one man both supporting and striking another. Maqoma played an apparent war survivor physically helping a half-dead companion (Thulani Chauke). Slowly, painfully, they crossed the full length of the stage, with



Maqoma periodically stopping and trying to force his nearly comatose companion to salute like a proper soldier.

Kentridge and Miller similarly worked out episodes with individual actors. Joanna Dudley is a performance artist with astonishing, non-traditional vocal virtuosity who has developed at least three previous works with Kentridge. For one of her several episodes in this show, Kentridge asked her to take a speech by Kaiser Wilhelm and “explode it, see what it can be.” She worked on it alone, then they edited and reworked it together. What eventually came out was a several-minute-long sequence of vocal scratches, squawks, and finally the throat-curdling screeches of a bird of prey—performed by Dudley, wearing an eagle-topped helmet, while the musical ensemble behind her played Johann Strauss’s “Kaiser-Walzer.”


Other texts suffered similar treatment, being transformed into onomatopoeic nonsense. Wilfred Owen’s “Anthem for Doomed Youth,” on English soldiers’ being slaughtered “like cattle,” was translated into French (“A bad Google translation,” Kentridge said with a smile), then stripped of vowels until it was just percussive voiced emotion. (They had considered translating it into dog barks, Kentridge recalled, but dropped the idea.)

Though the show also used a smorgasbord of languages—English, French, German, Hungarian (actually, Hungarian in Morse code), Swahili, isiZulu, and siSwati, among others—some of the actors did communicate comprehensibly, with proverbs, lists, and letters, nearly all taken from archival material. In particular, the performer Mncedisi Shabangu seemed almost an emissary to inform the audience, though he was quoting rather than lecturing. With great presence and unshakable dignity, dressed in a worn-looking gold corduroy jacket, his character narrated facts and statistics. He recited proverbs and read John Chilembwe’s doomed plea. He also offered wisdom both fractured and insightful. When he used languages other than English, they were usually subtitled somewhere on the back wall.

**THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT SHABANGU** tamed the 90-minute extravaganza into a logically comprehensible theatre work. By design he absolutely did not.

Kentridge had other important but only slyly acknowledged collaborators on *The Head*

and *the Load*: the Dadaist artistic insurrectionists, who formulated their values during the First World War. For the Dadaists, the insane brutality of the war offered decisive proof that the bourgeois values that underlay society and art were lethal. And if “sense” and the values orbiting around it were now the problem, nonsense could not only reflect the problem but be part of the solution. Kentridge dropped broad, if somewhat esoteric, hints of Dadaist affiliations throughout the show, especially toward the beginning. The first section, called “Manifestos,” included the iconic proclamation from Tristan Tzara’s Dada Manifesto: “Think. Think. Think. The Fact. The Fact. The Fact. KABOOM! KABOOM! KABOOM!” The earliest of several absurd language lessons in the show, mocking the mutual incomprehension at the core of colonialism, was built around “Ursonate,” a nonsense text of expressive sounds by Dadaist Kurt Schwitters. And during the great, awful shadow procession, amid the portraits of black anti-colonial leaders were the occasional well-known images of white men, Tzara and Schwitters.

The point, Kentridge explains, was not that *The Head and the Load*, should be “Dadaist” nonsense—far from it, although nonsense is essential to the piece. Rather Dada provided a “strategy” for dealing with their material—a scheme that included simultaneity and illogic. *The Head and the Load* overwhelmed the viewer with its wail, as well as its sometimes perverse beauty. But it was fundamentally different from a neatly structured play or an essay about a historical event (or, for that matter, an essay about a particular opera/theatre work such as *The Head and the Load*). Rather it immersed viewers in images, words, and sounds that captured parts of the experience, without organizing or taming them into a story. It was neither a narrative nor a lecture. It left us not only thinking about what happened back then but reeling. 

**Eileen Blumenthal, a critic and scholar based in New York City, is a professor of theatre at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University.**



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# The Inexhaustible Leigh Silverman

The trailblazing  
director takes tension  
and turns it into art

BY DIEP TRAN



JENNY ANDERSON

Leigh Silverman

**T**HIRTEEN YEARS AGO, THE *NEW YORK TIMES* ran an article titled “Why Female Directors Are Broadway’s Smallest.” The headline referred not to their height but to their scarcity: At the time, out of the 39 shows that opened on Broadway in 2005, just three were directed by women. To figure out why there was such a large gender gap, the *Times* interviewed a number of well-known producers, as well as a young, up-and-coming female director named Leigh Silverman, then making her Broadway directing debut with a play called *Well*, by Lisa Kron. At 31 years old, one of the youngest women to have directed on Broadway, she gave an answer that contained a veteran’s insight.

“Producers are looking for a director who is a strong, stable captain of their ship; a proven commodity that they believe will minimize their financial risk; and a leader who will weather high anxiety while staying creatively dexterous—traits generally thought to be associated with men,” she told the *Times*. “Unfortunately, women across the theatrical disciplines (producing, directing, designing, writing) are still prying the door open.”

Little did Silverman know, 13 years later, she would be one of the few female directors to consistently work on Broadway. When I emailed the article to Silverman and asked how she feels about having talked about gender equity for most of her career, she responded with characteristic good humor: “This is my life’s work, I know it. Yay?”

Since *Well* Silverman has directed on Broadway three

more times: *Violet*, *Chinglish*, and this season’s *The Lifespan of a Fact*. On the last show Silverman made history by putting together Broadway’s first all-female creative team. Speaking at a panel in December, alongside designers from *Lifespan*, Silverman said her choices in creatives were very intentional. “One of the things I felt was important was—in a play written by three white guys, based on a book written by two white guys—I bring on a lot of women. And also they were women who were diverse not only racially but in terms of age and experience,” she said to the predominantly female audience.

So making history “was an accident,” the moderator ventured. Said Silverman, with a hint of incredulity in her voice, “It wasn’t an accident, because I meant to do it. The accident is the patriarchy, not the design team.” The room erupted in applause. “I just went for the best people I knew. Bam!”

The list of frequent Silverman collaborators is impressive: Kron, Jeanine Tesori, David Henry Hwang, Ethan Lip-ton, David Greenspan. And Broadway isn’t her only playing field: In addition to *Lifespan* her directing credits this season include the Off-Broadway stagings of *Wild Goose Dreams* by Hansol Jung at the Public Theater and *Hurricane Diane* by Madeleine George, another frequent collaborator, Feb. 6 to March 10 at New York Theatre Workshop (in a co-production with WP Theater).

That’s par for the course: In any given year Silverman



will work on five to seven shows. On the day we met for lunch in New York City in early December, she had come from meetings with composer Shaina Taub (about a suffragette musical), and with Hwang and Tesori about *Soft Power*, a meta-musical about U.S.-China relations that features Hillary Clinton as a character. *Soft Power* got universal praise when it played last year in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and Silverman considers herself "optimistic" that it will arrive in New York in the fall.

It's just more shows on a long list of credits for Silverman, who moved to NYC in 1996, and has collected two Obies and a Tony nomination in the decades since. "Someone was like, 'You've done 40-something new plays in New York,' and I was like, 'How did that happen?'" she said with amazement.

From May 2010 to April 2017, according to a study by the League of Professional Theatre Women, Silverman was the most-employed female director Off-Broadway, with 15 credits to her name (and overall, female directors were only hired 34 percent

of the time in seven seasons). So chances are if you're reading this piece and you attend theatre in New York with any kind of regularity, you'll have seen multiple Silverman productions. "She's the hardest-working woman in show business," enthuses Hwang, who has worked with Silverman on five productions.

You can't pinpoint a Silverman "style," and she wouldn't call herself an auteur. Instead she's like Mary Poppins, reaching into her vast toolbox to find the best thing that will serve the play at hand; actor Cherry Jones calls her "a great schoolteacher who doesn't need to discipline." It can include spotlights and roving set pieces to denote memory in *Well*; projections and glass screens giving way to a couch play in *Lifespan*; a rotating turntable in *Chinglish*. "No two shows really look the same," agrees Kron. "She masters so many different kinds of work."

To Kron, who met Silverman in 1998, the director's biggest talent is storytelling. "She has complete respect for the writer's process, and authorial autonomy," says Kron. "She excels at asking the right questions to open a door to the next thing and the next,

helping the writer to get to the heart of whatever they're after."

Her facility is not only with writers, according to Jones, who Silverman directed in *Lifespan*. "The way she works with actors is unique to my experience," says two-time Tony winner. "She really gives you a tremendous amount of room to play, and always manages to drop in what you need to hear and what you're most missing in such a way that you hardly even know you've been given that direction."

Prior to *Lifespan* Jones had rarely done comedy, and she remembers struggling with how to set up and deliver a joke. "I said, 'Leigh, I know this part is meant to be funny.' And she said, 'None of it is meant to be funny. You don't have to think about that. There's nothing but the truth and reality of the moment.'" That was a light-bulb moment for Jones, who has garnered critical praise, and raucous laughter, for her performance.

**IT'S NOT AN EXAGGERATION TO SAY** that Silverman lives and breathes theatre.

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It's not just the aforementioned busy work schedule; it's that when she speaks about the craft, she seems to surge with electricity and endless amounts of energy.

"One of the things that I love about theatre is you have these great ideas about what you're going to do, and it's just nothing but problems," she explained over sushi. "I always say it's like 'Project Runway'; I'm gonna make this amazing thing, and literally it's nothing but problems. And that..." She pauses, searching for the right word. Tension? "Yeah!" she exclaimed, lighting up. "I like that. I like the challenge of that." She then shrugs. "I dunno, I guess I like things that are difficult."

When looking for projects, she looks for collaborators with that same energy and knack for problem-solving. "I am so attracted to writers who have an *inexhaustible* need to be better and to keep going," she said. Silverman may describe her collaborators as inexhaustible, but that's also an apt word for herself.

And while there is not a Silverman style, there are certain thematic territories she likes

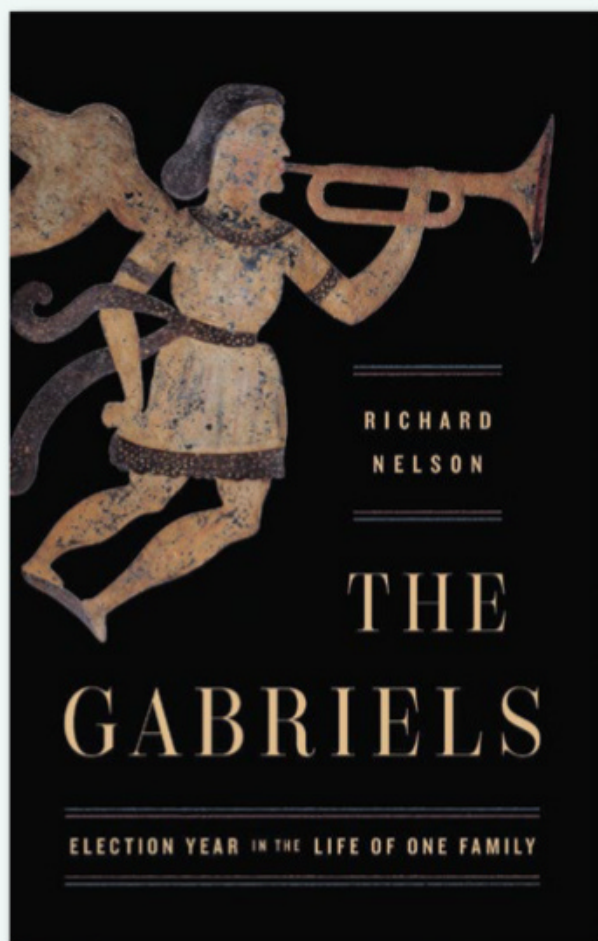


Lisa Kron and Jayne Houdyshell in *Well's* pre-Broadway run at the Public Theater.

to explore. The impulse came early. When Silverman was 17, she directed a play for her local high school called *Compromised Immunity*, about men living with AIDS. Because she was, in her words, "precocious," and a bit "bossy," and because it was 1992 in the middle of the AIDS crisis, "I was like, 'This

is the play that my high school needs,'" she said, fondly recalling her own gumption. "I had the captain of the lacrosse team play an AIDS patient with a terrible English accent. I was full in. We were drawing lesions on with Sharpie." She then adds dryly, "I'm sure it was terrible."

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Daniel Radcliffe, Cherry Jones, and Bobby Cannavale in *The Lifespan of a Fact* on Broadway.

During her childhood in Washington, D.C., theatregoing was a regular pastime for the Silverman family. Her dad was on the board of Arena Stage, and her stepmom was on the Theater J board. At 17 Silverman already had her sights set on being an artist, with a savvy and intelligence beyond her years. For *Compromised Immunity* she invited local artistic directors and critics to come see it. Among those in the audience was Howard Shalwitz, who was running Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company; he gave her her first professional critique.

"He was like, 'You did a fine job with the play—it's not very good,'" she recalled. Still, he praised her choice of material, telling her, "It's really important that you picked *this* play to do. And you're an artist that I'm gonna want to work with." Sure enough, Silverman did eventually direct at Woolly Mammoth (*Jump/Cut* by Neena Beber in 2003). (When reached for comment, Shalwitz said, "Leigh's work with the actors really stood out. She was precociously articulate and passionate in talking about it.")

And true to form, after graduating with dual degrees in directing and playwriting from Carnegie Mellon, Silverman's first job out of school was as a production assistant on the *Rent* national tour. "At that point being a PA on the *Rent* tour was the equivalent of making it, I just was like, it will never get better than this," she said with a laugh.

If there's a connecting thread among Silverman productions, it's that they are often stylistically adventurous and feature stories about outsiders. "I think Leigh feels

comfortable with working on material about otherness, and things that are outside the mainstream," remarks Hwang. "She has a lot of cultural competency, she has a lot of sensitivity. It's important for her work to be meaningful in a sociopolitical sense."

She brings this sensibility even to presumably mainstream work. In 2016, for example, Silverman directed a version of *Sweet Charity* Off-Broadway starring Sutton Foster (another frequent collaborator) that was pointedly darker than previous versions, with a Charity who gets steadily less bubbly as she begins to realize that happily ever after won't come when she finds a man but lies within herself. When asked about this impulse toward complication, Silverman explains that as an only child whose mother died when she was 13, she remembers her early life as "profoundly lonely. I think I spent a lot of years feeling on the other side of the looking glass from the rest of the world. And I'm sure being Jewish had a lot to do with it; I'm sure being gay had a lot to do with it."

And being a woman. In our two-hour conversation, Silverman frequently touched on the different expectations placed on women versus men in the theatre, and in wider society in general.

"It's been interesting about this all-female design team thing, because it's actually forced people to look," Silverman remarked. She thinks the high stakes of Broadway have something to do with it, as "it's historically been that the closer you get to money, the fewer women and people of color there are."

Silverman is frank about one reason she's able to work so often and to have built the clout she has: because she actively prioritized work at the expense of "financial stability, career stability, mental health," she said, listing them without hesitation. "There've been so many life events that I've missed because I'm in tech. It's hard when you think about the compromises you make and what's on the other side and is it enough? And certainly those are the questions that keep me up at night. Is it really worth it? What's the point? I feel like I've sacrificed so much to have this career, and is it a good trade-off? Some days the answer is really yes and some days I'm not so sure."

A few years ago, she told me, she had a "mourning period" when she realized that she could not afford to have children ("Working Off-Broadway, while it's my dream come true, is not particularly lucrative").

**BUT WHAT MAKES SILVERMAN A** force in the American theatre isn't just her artistic drive or her honesty about details normally covered by a curtain. It's that she is constantly asking questions. She opens her eyes to problems and reevaluates what she can personally do to contribute to a solution. For her creative team for *Lifespan*, she made sure there was a private lactation room for new mothers and a supervised play space for the kids. "I just think you shouldn't feel like kids are a liability to your career," she said.

After realizing a couple of years ago that her "life's work" of advocating for more women in the theatre wasn't sufficiently intersectional, embracing a full spectrum of difference, she decided, "I never want to be in another room I'm in charge of where there's only one of anybody." As someone who always felt like she was on the outside looking in, Silverman wants to make her own spaces welcoming. "Every decision that we make profoundly speaks for who we are and what we believe in, and nothing feels casual."

If that sounds like a killjoy attitude to some people, Silverman will have you know that she's aware. She did make her career on being perceptive. "I feel like it's because I'm a Sagittarius," she said with a smile. "There's a thing for Sagittarians about injustice—we don't like injustice. I think it's where some of my delightful self-righteousness comes from." ■



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# The Thanksgiving Play

BY LARISSA FASTHORSE



JOAN MARCUS

Greg Keller (Jaxton) and Jennifer Bareilles (Logan) in the world premiere of *The Thanksgiving Play* at Playwrights Horizons, New York, NY, directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel.





Larissa FastHorse

CONOR HORGAN

# Permission to Laugh

An interview with the playwright

BY BRUCE NORRIS

*In Larissa FastHorse's The Thanksgiving Play, a troupe of white theatremakers in an unnamed American town attempt to devise a play about the holiday's origins that will give due respect to the continent's Native peoples, often erased by its celebration, only to find their efforts thwarted by competing interests, creative differences, and crippling liberal guilt. The playwright spoke to Bruce Norris (Clybourne Park, Downstate), with whom she's collaborating on a new project.*

**BRUCE NORRIS:** Just to get a few things out of the way: I don't know your other plays, but I love *The Thanksgiving Play*. You and I know each other through the Federal Hall Project we're working on; we've only once been in the same room.

**LARISSA FASTHORSE:** And only for a very short amount of time.

**My primary observation was that you really like Twizzlers, because you consumed an entire package of them in the hour and a half that we sat there.**

Yes. One of my favorite foods.

**The other thing I would say is that when it comes to Native American issues, you might have the tendency to get a little prickly. I'm saying that in a positive way—I admire that quality in a person.**

It's interesting—I think that simply stating facts often gets misinterpreted as aggressive, which is fine. I will take it. For me, that's just fighting for the Native community. I'm surprisingly poor at fighting for myself. For whatever reason, I've been given access to rooms that 99.9 percent of my community haven't been, so I need to speak up for them.

**Why do you think that is?**

It's a combination of being removed from the reservation and ending up with a Hunka family who were white, and then ultimately, through physical therapy and problems with my legs, being put into ballet, the whitest of white forms of art, and surviving that...

**Barbershop quartet is actually slightly whiter.**

That's probably true, yeah. [Laughter] So *one* of the whitest. Also being half-white myself, I'm someone who can "pass" in many ways. So all of those things that were very painful in my childhood—growing up separated from my Lakota people and being called a half-breed—have turned into my superpower. Those are the things that get me into the room. I can code-switch like nobody, and I understand the extremely white world of theatre and how it works in a way that, unfortunately, most Native folks haven't been given access to.

**Do you feel that there are more, shall we say, "militant" Native playwrights who are getting sort of closed out because of their ideological positions? Or just because of their lack of access?**

It's a combination of things. A lot of the Native American theatre predecessors on whose shoulders I'm standing did come from a more militant time and way of expressing themselves. Often they were writing for Native people and weren't willing to translate in the way I've chosen to translate.

**Well, also, is it possible to make your living as a playwright writing exclusively for a Native audience?**

It is difficult, but I also think that's the American theatre's fault. The American theatre still wants things that make a white audience comfortable.

**Because I'm a pessimist, I think white people like to demonstrate what you've called "performative wokeness," so**

**ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT** Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota) is an award-winning playwright, director and choreographer. Larissa's produced plays include *The Thanksgiving Play* (Playwrights Horizons, Artists Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse), *What Would Crazy Horse Do?* (KCRep, Relative Theatrics, Turtle Theater Collective), *Urban Rez* (Cornerstone Theater Company, ASU Gammage 2019), *Landless* and *Cow Pie Bingo* (AlterTheater), *Average Family* (Children's Theater Company of Minneapolis), *Teaching Disco Squaredancing to Our Elders: A Class Presentation* (Native Voices at the Autry), *Vanishing Point* (Eagle Project), and *Cherokee Family Reunion* (Mountainside Theater). Larissa is in development for new plays for Yale Rep, Children's Theater Company, History Theater of Minnesota, and Perseverance Theater Company. Additional theatres that have commissioned or developed plays with Larissa include Kennedy Center TYA, Baltimore's Center Stage, Arizona Theater Company, Mixed Blood, The Lark Playwrights Week, Milwaukee Rep, the Center Theatre Group Writer's Workshop, and Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor. Larissa was awarded the PEN USA Literary Award for Drama, NEA Distinguished New Play Development Grant, Joe Dowling Annamaghkerrig Fellowship, AATE Distinguished Play Award, Inge Residency, Sundance/Ford Foundation Fellowship, Aurand Harris Fellowship, the UCLA Native American Program Woman of the Year, and numerous Ford, Mellon, and NEA Grants. She is a current member of the Playwright's Union, Director's Lab West 2015, and Playwright's Center Core Writers, and cofounder of Indigenous Direction, a consulting company for organizations such as the Guthrie, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Western Arts Alliance, and Woolly Mammoth. They consult on regional and national programs: [www.indigenoudirection.com](http://www.indigenoudirection.com). [www.hoganhorsestudio.com](http://www.hoganhorsestudio.com).

**ABOUT THE PLAY** *The Thanksgiving Play* was commissioned and originally produced by Artists Repertory Theatre (Dámaso Rodríguez, artistic director; Sarah Horton, managing director) in Portland, Oregon, on April 1, 2018. It was directed by Luan Schooler. The set design was by Megan Wilkerson, the costume design was by Emily Horton, the lighting design was by Kristeen Willis Crosser, the original music and sound design were by Ed Littlefield; the stage manager was Carol Ann Wohlmüt. The cast was: Sarah Lucht (Logan), Michael O'Connell (Jaxton), Claire Rigsby (Alicia), and Chris Harder (Caden). *The Thanksgiving Play* opened at Capital Stage (Michael Stevenson, producing artistic director; Keith Riedell, general manager) in Sacramento, California, on June 20, 2018. It was directed by



**we can show how receptive we are to different cultures. I'm dubious that we really think about what we want to see at all.**

I hear what you're saying. But my experience has been that when I have a play in a theatre, whether it's *Thanksgiving Play*, where it's Indigenous issues hidden in a play, or whether it's straight-on Indigenous characters, the plays do really well. People want to see them. They sell very well. I can't tell you how many emails I have that start with, "We're so surprised that..."

**"We actually enjoyed it!"**

Right. Native theatre, I think, is sometimes seen as the charity slot, but it does well, better than expected, again and again.

**Okay, now I'm gonna go to the play. I'm assuming that the accuracy with which you depict theatremakers arises out of your personal experiences working in theatre.**

Absolutely.

**Do you feel that the excruciating attempts of white theatremakers to be politically correct is more pronounced in some places than in others?**

No, I really don't. I feel like it's pretty equally frustrating across the board. I would say the more non-traditional people think they are, the more dangerous they get. Because they think they're the good guys, they're the most enlightened.

**That's the character of Jaxton in your play, right? He's the guy who thinks he's got the answer on every possible issue.**

Exactly. Because he's done the work, he's been in the equity training, and he's cried the white tears, he's got it all.

**Do you take offense to the label "satire"?**

No. I love satire.

**Because I feel that's a label that has been applied to me sometimes, and it seems a kind of lesser category.**

I use a lot of satire. What I love about satire—I don't know, maybe I'm wrong, but I feel like it's one step up from humor, from comedy. Because comedy seems to be like the basement of no respect in theatre, though it is, in my opinion, the hardest thing to write and perform well. To add to that, being Native American, everything's supposed to be so serious. And people will constantly say to me, "I

laughed—is that okay?" And I'm like, "Well, it was funny. So yes."

**Did you feel that you had to sort of grant permission to an audience to laugh at a play that's about historical atrocities?**

With this particular play, people understand laughing at the white parts. They get very uncomfortable when it gets closer to the Native things, or showing some of the ways that white people appropriate our pain, our tragedy. The white people get really nervous and the Native people laugh the hardest, because it's so true, and you have to laugh or you would cry, you know? My favorite laugh in the theatre is when a person laughs, and then you hear them, like, stop themselves from laughing.


**What do you think is the actual efficacy of theatre? I've often said to people that if your goal is to effect political change, making plays is the least efficient possible means of achieving that. When you're writing plays, what do you hope for?**

Well, I spend a ridiculously nerdy amount of time studying neuroscience and how the brain works. I don't think anyone's gonna see one of my plays and then sweeping policy change will be made. The work that I do in my plays is a constant calibration to help folks feel like they're going down a familiar synapse pattern, feel they can empathize—and then disrupt that in a way they don't know how to deal with. It's pretty easy doing that with Native issues, because 99 percent of white people have no clue, right? I throw things at them they don't know how to deal with, which forces their brain to go searching around in those little synapse patterns, trying to find something that matches. Hopefully they don't, which means they're going to have to talk about it and think about it. That's what I'm trying to do.

**You're not by any chance a Monty Python fan, are you?**

Oh yeah. Huge.

**There's a great sketch called "Confuse-a-Cat," where there's a cat that's sort of lethargic and unresponsive, so they perform a show that's a surreal, meaningless pattern of weird behaviors. And the cat is energized and refreshed because it's confused. I feel like "Confuse-a-Cat" is sort of what we do.**

Exactly. That's really all I'm aiming for. If I can disrupt the thinking pattern of a person, and cause them to create new patterns, some new little synapse maps in their brain, maybe somewhere down the road that will lead to new actions. That's success to me. 

Michael Stevenson. The set design was by Justin Muñoz, the costume and puppet design were by Rebecca Redmond, the lighting design was by Jessica Bertine, the sound design was by Ed Lee; the production stage manager was Joelle Robertson. The cast was: Jennifer Le Blanc (Logan), Cassidy Brown (Jaxton), Gabby Battista (Alicia), and Jouni Kirjola (Caden). *The Thanksgiving Play* received its world premiere at Playwrights Horizons (Tim Sanford, artistic director; Leslie Marcus, managing director) in New York City, on October 12, 2018. It was directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel. The set design was by Wilson Chin, the costume and puppet design were by Tilly Grimes, the lighting design was by Isabella Byrd, the sound design was by Mikael Sulaiman; the production stage manager was Katie Ailinger. The cast was: Jennifer Bareilles (Logan), Greg Keller (Jaxton), Margo Seibert (Alicia), and Jeffrey Bean (Caden). *The Thanksgiving Play* was developed with support from the Guthrie, U. C. Berkeley, Baltimore Center Stage, the Playwrights' Center, the Lark, Grand Performances, and Milwaukee Rep. *The Thanksgiving Play* will be produced at Cincinnati Playhouse in 2019.

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# The Thanksgiving Play

By Larissa FastHorse

## CASTING NOTE

All ages are open and POC who can pass as white should be considered for all characters

## CHARACTERS

**LOGAN:** Female, Caucasian-looking, the high school drama teacher who's always pushing the envelope in potentially inappropriate ways. Earnest about theatre and proving herself.

**JAXTON:** Male, Caucasian-looking, yoga practitioner/actor. Politically correct to a fault, a big one. He's that confident guy everyone loves, but his logical PC thinking takes weird turns.

**ALICIA:** Female, brunette Caucasian-looking but has looks that would have been cast as ethnic in 1950s movies. Without guile. Sexy and hot, but not bright.

**CADEN:** Male, Caucasian-looking, the academic. Awkward elementary school history teacher with dramatic aspirations but no experience.

## NOTE

"All" means to play with who says what, *not* everyone says it together.

"Actor" means an actor outside of the scene.

Scenes One, Three, Five and Seven are sadly inspired by the internet, mostly current teachers' Pinterest boards. Play with the theatricality of these scenes; perhaps children perform them, perhaps puppets, perhaps the actors as children, perhaps video, perhaps anything. Have fun.

Setting for the rest of the scenes: a high school drama room anywhere but the Los Angeles area.

## SCENE ONE

*Performers enter in school Thanksgiving outfits, Pilgrims, etc. They sing to the tune of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Solos and movement encouraged.*

**ACTOR:** [www.childhood101.com/preschoolcountingsongs](http://www.childhood101.com/preschoolcountingsongs)

**ALL:** On the first day of Thanksgiving the Natives gave to me:  
A pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the second day of Thanksgiving the Natives gave to me:

Two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the third day of Thanksgiving the Natives gave to me:

Three Native headdresses, two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the fourth day of Thanksgiving, the Natives gave to me:

Four bows and arrows, three Native headdresses, two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the fifth day of Thanksgiving, the Natives gave to me:

Five pairs of moccasins, four bows and arrows, three Native headdresses, two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the sixth day of Thanksgiving, the Natives gave to me:

Six Native teepees, five pairs of moccasins, four bows and arrows, three Native headdresses, two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the seventh day of Thanksgiving, the Natives gave to me:

Seven Native tom-toms, six Native teepees, five pairs of moccasins, four bows and arrows, three Native headdresses, two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the eighth day of Thanksgiving, the Natives gave to me:

Eight woven blankets, seven Native tom-toms, six Native teepees, five pairs of moccasins, four bows and arrows, three Native headdresses, two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

On the ninth day of Thanksgiving, the Natives gave to me:

Nine cornucopias, eight woven blankets, seven Native tom-toms, six Native teepees, five pairs of moccasins, four bows and arrows, three Native headdresses, two turkey gobblers, and a pumpkin in a pumpkin patch.

**ACTOR:** Teacher's note: This song can do more than teach counting. I divide my students into Indians and Pilgrims, so the Indians can practice sharing.

## SCENE TWO

*A high school drama department classroom. It's bright and open with large recycle bins and a trendy water dispenser (alkaline, deionized, sewer, whatever is hippest). The walls are lined with cast*

*photos, Shakespeare pun posters and funny props. The usual high school play posters are represented along with some surprising ones like The Shipment, Extremities, The Ice Man Cometh.*

*Jaxton and Logan's clothes come from overpriced vintage/hip clothing stores where clothes from 10 years ago are considered "retro." Alicia shops at Urban Outfitters with deliberate touches of money: Prada sunglasses, the it jeans of the moment, etc. Caden shops at the Gap. Banana Republic for something dressy. He carries a briefcase of papers. Jaxton is purposefully never organized, he's on the floor, draped backward over a chair. Logan and Caden are institutionalized, they sit forward in chairs although Logan fights it. All of them fall into yoga asanas from time to time although Caden's aren't as skillful.*

*Occasional "snaps" from everyone.*

*Jaxton and Logan set up the food table. Logan discovers a small cotton bag.*

**LOGAN:** Is this for me?

**JAXTON:** Happy first day of rehearsal.

**LOGAN:** Jaxton, you didn't have to get me anything.

**JAXTON:** I know this gig is important to you so I want you to have something extra special. *She opens the bag excitedly and pulls out...a mason jar.*

**LOGAN:** Oh. Wow. It's great.

**JAXTON:** It's a water bottle.

**LOGAN:** Sure.

**JAXTON:** It's made with recycled glass from broken windows in housing projects.

**LOGAN:** No way? That's amazing!

**JAXTON:** I know.

**LOGAN:** Where did you find it?

**JAXTON:** At the farmers market. It's symbolic of the way we're gong to create this play. We start with this pile of jagged facts and misguided governmental policies and historical stereotypes about race then turn all that into something beautiful and dramatic and educational for the kids.

**LOGAN:** It's perfect. Thanks for getting me this gig. I'm not going to screw it up. *They hug.*

*Jaxon pulls out a wedge of cheese.*

**LOGAN:** What's that?

**JAXTON:** What's what?

**LOGAN:** Is that soy cheese or coagulated cheese squeezed from a cow?

**JAXTON:** Coagulated.

You know I'm a vegan ally, but I've come to realize that I like cheese on my crackers.





CHARR CRAIL

Jennifer Le Blanc (Logan), Gabby Battista (Alicia), Jouni Kirjola (Caden) and Cassidy Brown (Jaxton) in the California premiere of *The Thanksgiving Play* at Capital Stage, directed by Michael Stevenson.

**LOGAN:** I already struggle with the holiday of death.

**JAXTON:** If you're planning on "The Holiday of Death" as the title of our Thanksgiving play you'll lose your job for sure.

**LOGAN:** This is far more than a Thanksgiving play now. I got the Gender Equality in History Grant, the Excellence in Educational Theatre Fellowship, a municipal arts grant and the Go! Girls! Scholastic Leadership Mentorship.

**JAXTON:** I know parents, to get them back on your side, you need to kill a turkey.

**LOGAN:** I'm a vegan.

**JAXTON:** You're a teaching artist with a 300 parent petition to fire you.

**LOGAN:** I am staying in the positive. This kind of talk isn't helping.

**JAXTON:** OK. Sending you nothing but light.

**LOGAN:** Thank you.

I have a surprise too. I also got that Native American Heritage Month Awareness Through Art Grant.

**JAXTON:** Really?

**LOGAN:** They gave me funding so I could hire a professional actor.

**JAXTON:** Finally! Thank y—

**LOGAN:** And I was able to bring the perfect one to town. She elevates the whole project.

**JAXTON:** Professional actor right here.

**LOGAN:** Technically, you volunteer for these school plays.

**JAXTON:** I get paid for those shows at the farmers market.

**LOGAN:** Yeah but you do it on a street corner and are paid in a coffee can.

**JAXTON:** That is my official performance spot given to me by farmers market security because they understand the importance of teaching about composting.

**LOGAN:** Jaxton, I value your work, but this woman is from Los Angeles.

**JAXTON:** Here we go with Los Angeles again. It's not the center of the acting world.

**LOGAN:** It kind of is.

**JAXTON:** The *commercial* acting world. Be grateful you didn't make it there. It shows what kind of person you are.

**LOGAN:** The kind of person who wasn't beautiful enough or sexy enough to compete?

**JAXTON:** Don't let your head go there Logan.

**LOGAN:** Well, wait until you see this actor. She's so beautiful. So L.A.

**JAXTON:** What is beauty?

**LOGAN:** A social construct.

**JAXTON:** That we don't believe in. We value talent and art, not looks. You are a talented actress.

**LOGAN:** Even better, I'm a director now. But I still let my past in L.A. color my present, don't I?

**JAXTON:** You can't reach new lands until you let go of the shore. Or in this case return to

old lands, but as a more enlightened person because of the journey to the other land that was new but is now old and needs to be let go of.

**LOGAN:** Exactly. I think I can be a mentor to this woman. Help her recover from the false value placed on her sexuality because I've taken that journey. Show her how much more she can be. Thank you for that self-awareness.

**JAXTON:** You are one of the most self-aware people I know.

**LOGAN:** Since knowing you.

**JAXTON:** I just do my best and hope to Buddha that my karma makes up for the rest of it. *They kiss.*

**LOGAN:** It's almost time for rehearsal. We should decouple.

*They separate and perform a decoupling ritual moving from affection to neutral. There is a memorable movement that can be repeated whenever they get too personal.*

**JAXTON:** Nothing but gender neutral actor/director respect from here on.

I'll get rid of the cheese.

**LOGAN:** No, I can handle it.

*Caden enters.*

**CADEN:** Am I in the right place for rehearsal?

**LOGAN:** Welcome, Mr. Green. I'm Logan, the director and your fellow collaborator.

**CADEN:** Please call me Caden. I'm only Mr. Green to my students.



**LOGAN:** This is Jaxton Smithton. Caden was generously assigned to us by the school district as our history specialist.

**JAXTON:** You're at Lincoln Elementary, right?

**CADEN:** I assure you my studies in American History go deeper than the elementary school level.

**JAXTON:** That's cool bro. We met at the Let's Learn! Science! tour. I was playing Einstein. You had the student that threw up on my shoes?

**CADEN:** Actually we met long before that. I've been to Let's Learn! Math! and Let's Learn! Geography! and all of the rest of the Let's Learn! tours.

**JAXTON:** I don't think we played at Lincoln on the Let's Learn! Math! tour.

**CADEN:** I took a personal day and saw it at Washington Elementary. I'm a huge fan of your work. *(To Logan)* And I've seen every show you've directed since you got to Jefferson High. *The Iceman Cometh* was made so much more relevant with 15 year olds.

**LOGAN:** I appreciate that.

**CADEN:** It didn't deserve to be shut down.

**LOGAN:** Three hundred parents disagree.

**JAXTON:** For now.

**LOGAN:** I so appreciate your support Caden.

**CADEN:** I'm an amateur actor and writer on the side so it is a real thrill to work with professionals like yourselves.

**JAXTON:** That's awesome man. *Us professionals* welcome you.

**CADEN:** I'm especially excited because the email said this is a devised piece. So we're all contributing, right?

**LOGAN:** Yes. But as the director I have the final say in the construction.

**CADEN:** This is a dream come true for me.

**LOGAN:** I'm going to rely on you quite a bit. History is not my strength.

We're waiting on one more actor. Have some refreshments while I text her.

**JAXTON:** Some cheese Caden?

*Logan grabs her phone to text as Alicia runs in. The guys check her out.*

**ALICIA:** So sorry I'm late. My Uber app disappeared and the place where I'm staying has terrible reception and I couldn't find the internet password so I had to take a bus. Have you ever taken a bus? It's impossible. I mean literally, it is not possible.

**CADEN:** I think the word you want is "figuratively" not "literally."

**ALICIA:** What?

**CADEN:** Because you're here. So it wasn't "literally" impossible. It's a common mistake.

**ALICIA:** Are you the director?

**LOGAN:** No, I am.

*Alicia pointedly turns away from Caden.*

**LOGAN:** We met at your Skype audition.

**ALICIA:** I thought you were the casting director.

**LOGAN:** We don't have casting directors for elementary school shows. I'm the director director.

**ALICIA:** Oh. I'm Alicia. *(Ab-lee-see-a)*

**LOGAN:** Yes, I remember. I hired you. I'm Logan. This is Caden and Jaxton.

**ALICIA:** Where's my script?

**LOGAN:** As my email said, we're devising the piece together. That's how I work.

**ALICIA:** I'm an *actress*.

**LOGAN:** We work as a team to come up with ideas, try them out, improv some scenes and then I put the connecting parts in and type it up.

**ALICIA:** Could I come back when there's a script? I just got to town and have a hundred things to do. And there's the bus. Figuratively.

**CADEN:** The bus itself is literal.

**LOGAN:** The devising process is meant to empower the actors.

**ALICIA:** Do I get paid extra for empowerment?

**LOGAN:** No. But I want you to know that your voice is the most important one in this play. More important than mine. We could not do this without you.

**ALICIA:** Really?

**JAXTON:** Really?

**LOGAN:** Absolutely. And personally, I'm here for you.

**ALICIA:** OK, I'll try it.

**CADEN:** Is this how you created all of your shows?

**JAXTON:** It's been a dream of ours to get to do a fully devised educational play. It's the wave of the future in theatre. I mean actors in Sweden haven't touched a script in years. They're so far ahead of us.

**ALICIA:** Ikea is in Sweden right?

**CADEN:** Yes.

**ALICIA:** I love Ikea!

**CADEN:** Me too. Everything in my apartment is Ikea. Except my mattress and appliances. And the toilet. But everything else.

**JAXTON:** We all got sucked in, but now we realize what a huge environmental disaster it is to ship boxed packages all over the world when we can buy local.

**CADEN:** Oh. Yeah.

**LOGAN:** Anyway, let's get started.

**CADEN:** I combed through all of my research from grad school and came up with some ideas. Did my homework.

*He chuckles.*

**LOGAN:** Let's start with your research then. Good drama is at its core, truth.

**CADEN:** I suggest we begin 4,000 years ago when the ancient northern Europeans joined the agricultural revolution and reaped their first organized harvest as farmers. In order to give thanks to the gods for this new way of life they feasted with ceremonies. Thousands of years later those ceremonies become known as the modern Harvest Home Festival.

**ALICIA:** I thought we're doing a Thanksgiving play.

**JAXTON:** Another option is to focus on the fact that this is a November play.

**ALICIA:** Right. For Thanksgiving.

**JAXTON:** For Native American Heritage Month.

**ALICIA:** We're performing at something called the All School Turkey Trot. Not the Buffalo Teepee Trot.

**JAXTON:** It's not my place to tell you how to express yourself, but sound waves travel you know.

**LOGAN:** As our Native American compass, Alicia is allowed to say what she wants about it. *Alicia flips her hair.*

**JAXTON:** Native American?

**LOGAN:** I told you we got that Heritage Month grant. To hire the professional actor.

**JAXTON:** You didn't say it was for a Native American actor.

**LOGAN:** I thought it was implied.

**JAXTON (To Alicia):** I'm so sorry. It is truly an honor to work with you. I have always been drawn to your ways.

**ALICIA:** You're a fan of my work?

**JAXTON:** More than a fan. I'm a devoted follower.

**ALICIA:** That's sweet. I just opened a new Instagram account. You should follow that one too.

**JAXTON:** I will.

**LOGAN:** Now is a good time to mention that in the interest of full disclosure, there are many factors, grant and school board requirements that we need to fulfill with this piece, including Thanksgiving. I am a vegan so that subject is especially sensitive for me. However I want to lift up the acknowledgment that although my sensitivity about the slaughter of millions of animals, including forty-five million turkeys, is valid, I am conscious of not allowing my personal issues to take up more space in the room than the justified anger of the Native people around this idea of Thanksgiving in our post-colonial society. I want to make that crystal clear. Especially for you Alicia.

**ALICIA:** Um...OK.

**LOGAN:** If there is anything you want to say on the subject, please know we are holding that space for you.



**ALICIA:** I'm good right here.

**LOGAN:** OK. This bit of research is great Caden and helps fulfill my Excellence in Education Grant. But I wonder if the best place to start a 45-minute Thanksgiving play for elementary grades is 4,000 years ago?

**ALICIA:** Yeah, America didn't even exist.

**JAXTON:** Better times. That makes me wonder if using the word of the conqueror, "American," could be a trigger for people? What word do you prefer for naming this physical space? I've heard "Turtle Island" used a lot. Do you prefer that?

**ALICIA:** I like turtles.

**LOGAN:** Thanks for lifting up that awareness Jaxton. Coded language is an issue we need to be conscious of, especially when dealing with the next generation.

**ALICIA:** I don't get codes.

**JAXTON:** Because that's Navajo.

**CADEN:** My next idea is pretty cool. Harvest Home Festival is a direct line that can easily be drawn to our modern Thanksgiving celebration. See I propose that we open on a huge bonfire with ancient Northern European ancestors dancing and feasting on one side and—this is the exciting part—ancient Native American people doing the exact same thing on the other side!

**ALICIA:** I don't get it.

**CADEN:** Of course they weren't called "Native American" then. Coded language, thank you Alicia. We show that both these cultures were already celebrating harvests on both sides of the Atlantic. Two peoples on a parallel track for centuries before they collided as settlers and Wampanoags. History is so dynamic. I mean it's really perfect for theatre.

**LOGAN:** Yes. It is. I'm feeling your passion and I love that. But here's the reality, it's just the three of you.

**CADEN:** OK.

**LOGAN:** And it's a school show. Like all the other ones you've seen. So...fire won't fly.

**CADEN:** Then I'm not clear how you plan to depict anything, even up to the "traditionally" recognized Thanksgiving, since all of their lighting, cooking and warmth was fire.

**LOGAN:** We're going to have to imagine that part.

**CADEN:** But your email said we are going to do something revolutionary in educational theatre.

**JAXTON:** We're aiming for a revolution of ideas.

**CADEN:** So, we open on the two civilizations having feasts on opposite sides of...the imaginary fire?

**LOGAN:** Let's put that in the simmering pot

for now.

**CADEN:** But to make it simmer—

**LOGAN:** Let's move forward in history. What can we do to break down the myths and stereotypes of Thanksgiving in 45 minutes with three people? Create a revolution in their minds?

**ALICIA:** Forty-five minutes seems kinda long.

**LOGAN:** Well, it's a play. So actually it's quite short.

**ALICIA:** But an average show at Disneyland is 20 minutes. That's what they think kids can handle.

**LOGAN:** Um, we can consider that point of view but I don't think Disney—

**ALICIA:** If anyone knows kids, it's Disneyland. It's like science to them. I know, I was the third understudy for Jasmine.

**JAXTON:** Isn't she Middle Eastern?

**ALICIA:** My look is super flexible.

**JAXTON:** Oh yeah, I totally get that.

**LOGAN:** I hear you Alicia, but the standard commission from this school district is for a 45-minute show, so we should probably trust that they know a little something about children. Even if they do feed them slaughtered flesh and genetically enhanced garbage every day.

**ALICIA:** I guess.

**LOGAN:** Caden, what can you tell us about the first recognized Thanksgiving in America?

**CADEN:** I imagined the third scene three thousand and five hundred years after the first.

**LOGAN:** What year?

**CADEN:** 1565.

**LOGAN:** That sounds close.

**CADEN:** In Saint Augustine, Florida.

**ALICIA:** The Pilgrims landed in Florida? I did not know that. So that's why Disneyworld is there? Because it was the original crossroads of the world?

**CADEN:** Saint Augustine was a settlement of hundreds of Spanish people led by Pedro Menéndez.

**ALICIA:** I might be a little bit Spanish. Para Español, oprima numero dos.

**CADEN:** This Thanksgiving was a mass to celebrate a safe journey. Pedro ordered that the Native people be fed as an act of good will. Fun fact. Because they just came from Puerto Rico, it is likely that there were tropical fruits at the first feast instead of yams and squash.

**JAXTON:** So you want us to celebrate Native American Heritage Month with a play about Spanish people holding a Catholic mass and eating pineapples?

**CADEN:** That's just one scene.

**LOGAN:** The missionaries, Catholicism specifically, are difficult subjects for Indigenous

people.

**CADEN:** But it's true.

**JAXTON:** Seriously?

**LOGAN:** Can we jump ahead to New England?

**CADEN:** But the scene of the next recognized Thanksgiving happens 30 years later in Texas.

**ALICIA:** OMG. There were Pilgrims in Texas too?

**CADEN:** An expedition of 500 Spanish people crossed the desert from Mexico to Texas. Men, women, children and animals died along the way. Finally, they made it to the Rio Grande. However, many of the people were so overcome with excitement to find water that they rushed into the river and drowned.

**JAXTON:** Gotta admit, did not see that coming.

**CADEN:** Those that remained, gave thanks.

**LOGAN:** How is this appropriate for children?

**CADEN:** The local Indigenous people joined them and caught fish for the feasting.

**LOGAN:** From the Rio Grande?

**CADEN:** I assume so.

**ALICIA:** Ew.

**CADEN:** People in El Paso still celebrate that feast as the first Thanksgiving. Only it's in April.

**LOGAN:** Caden, are we getting close to the normal Thanksgiving? The relatively happy one? In November.

**CADEN:** That's my next series of proposed scenes. But I warn you, there is drama galore. At least four different dates are vying for the privilege of being "first." And the reasons behind the feast are incredibly varied. From the gruesome—

**LOGAN:** Worse than eating fish that ate your drowned friends?

**CADEN:** Much worse. To speculation that the entire Thanksgiving story is a fiction concocted to celebrate the victory of capitalism over communism.

**JAXTON:** So far all of these stories are coming from the non-Indigenous point of view. I think we need to hold space for the Native perspective.

**ALICIA:** That's my role.

**LOGAN:** Alicia, what were you told about the first Thanksgiving in your family?

**ALICIA:** Well, not much really. I mean we aren't religious or anything.

**JAXTON:** Of course not.

**ALICIA:** We just ate food and watched games. We didn't talk about it much.

**LOGAN:** Maybe we could do something with that? Use play as a universal way to connect with the kids instead of those tired children's songs we make them sing every year.

**JAXTON:** What kinds of games?

**ALICIA:** Just the ones that everyone watches.



**LOGAN:** Right. Is there any chance we could learn about these games with you, as a cast?

**ALICIA:** I guess. I think the Chiefs are playing Monday, right?

**JAXTON:** There's a whole game just for Chiefs? That's amazing. How many are there?

**ALICIA:** The same number as any team I guess. I don't really know football that well. It was just on in the background.

**JAXTON:** Wait, football?

**ALICIA:** Sure. What do you watch?

*They laugh uneasily.*

**LOGAN:** NFL football. Well, not anymore, but...

**JAXTON:** This is a perfect example of the exotification of your people. We assumed that you were watching Native American lacrosse or something, instead of allowing you to just be contemporary people. Of course your family watched football. Whose didn't?

**CADEN:** Mine didn't.

**LOGAN:** I can't believe we did that. Sorry Alicia.

**ALICIA:** We did do one different thing on Thanksgiving. It came from my mom's people.

**LOGAN:** Do you mind sharing it with us?

**JAXTON:** Maybe we could get permission to incorporate it into the play? Respectfully.

**ALICIA:** First we'd buy an extra frozen turkey, a small one, and leave it in the freezer. Then before dinner all the kids would go out to the driveway and set up these wood blocks like bowling pins. Then we'd take turns rolling the frozen turkey at the pins and see who could knock down the most.

**JAXTON:** Like bowling?

**LOGAN:** With a frozen turkey?

**ALICIA:** Yeah that's what they called it, Frozen Turkey Bowling. It was hilarious. Your hands would be freezing so you'd just chuck the thing and it would go all over the driveway. They call them Butterballs, but really, they're not shaped like balls.

**LOGAN:** This is your family tradition?

**ALICIA:** My mom grew up in Iowa, so it probably worked better there because it was cold. In L.A. it would start melting and get all mushy and runny.

*Logan looks like she is going to puke.*

**LOGAN:** Oh my God.

**JAXTON:** Deep breaths.

**LOGAN:** We really want to honor your voice and your people's. I just realized that I never asked who your people are.

**ALICIA:** Um...you mean my family?

**LOGAN:** What are they called?

**ALICIA:** Well my dad's side is the Longs and my mom's is Hogan. But I use my middle name as my last name for acting. It makes it so I can play all kinds of people.

**JAXTON:** Can I ask something in all respect?

**ALICIA:** I guess.

**JAXTON:** Isn't that problematic? I mean we're all becoming aware of redface. Doesn't it worry you to be playing other races?

**ALICIA:** My agent had me take headshots as six different ethnic people, which got me many roles such as Jasmine.

**JAXTON:** How do you even take headshots as ethnicities? What does that look like?

**ALICIA:** Different hair, accessories. My Native American shot has me in braids and a turquoise necklace.

**JAXTON:** Native Americans need to take "Native American" headshots? That seems wrong.

**ALICIA:** Every actress in L.A. has different types of shots. My agent told me to.

**LOGAN:** I wouldn't do everything your agent says.

**ALICIA:** He's my former agent now so I don't do anything he says. Besides Native Americans like invented turquoise so I don't see why wearing it in a shot would piss them off. It's paying them respect.

**LOGAN:** Them who?

**ALICIA:** The Native Americans.

**LOGAN:** But you're them.

**ALICIA:** Who?

**LOGAN:** Native American.

**ALICIA:** I *play* Native American.

**JAXTON:** You're not Native American?

**ALICIA:** I'm English and French and a little Spanish we think.

**LOGAN:** But I hired you to be the Native American.

**ALICIA:** Yeah.

**LOGAN:** But you aren't?

**ALICIA:** No.

**LOGAN:** But you were my cultural compass.

**ALICIA:** You hired me to be an actress. Don't worry, I'm gonna act my ass off.

**LOGAN:** But that's why your voice was so important.

**ALICIA:** My voice is the most important. You said so.

**LOGAN:** Because I thought you were Native American.

**ALICIA:** So non-Native American voices aren't important?

**JAXTON:** Didn't you wonder why we were asking your advice on all of this stuff?

**ALICIA:** Because it's *devised*.

**LOGAN:** But we need a Native American person to do this play. I got a grant.

**ALICIA:** Look, you hired me off my Native American headshot, so that's on you. You can't fire me because of this. It's a law.

**LOGAN:** So we're four white people making

a culturally sensitive First Thanksgiving play for Native American Heritage Month? Oh my goddess.

*Jaxton reaches out to comfort her, she pulls away.*

**ALICIA:** Whatever, it's theatre. We don't need actual Native Americans to tell a Native American story. I mean, none of us are actual Pilgrims are we?

**CADEN:** Interestingly they didn't call themselves Pilgrims at all. That's a name given to them—

**ALICIA:** The point is, we're actors. We act. That's the job. Is Lumière a real candlestick?

**JAXTON:** Actually he kind of was.

**ALICIA:** Was Grandmother Willow a real willow?

**CADEN:** She's animated so—

**ALICIA:** In the Disneyland show?

**CADEN:** No?

**ALICIA:** Exactly. And that whole Pocahontas cast was Filipino. We shared a green room.

**JAXTON:** Do you have any non-Disney references in your life?

**LOGAN:** I could lose my job over this.

**CADEN:** I don't think that Alicia playing Native will be a problem with the school district. There are schools that are nearly all black, all Hispanic. If they tried to find ethnic-specific roles for everyone to play, they wouldn't be able to produce anything.

**LOGAN:** I know about color-blind casting, Caden, I'm the drama teacher. There are grants at stake! A lot of them. And the petition! If I'm not a director or an educator I'm... nothing. I'm—

**JAXTON:** Lo, stay in *this* moment.

**LOGAN:** But this moment sucks. Take five!  
*Everyone disperses.*

### SCENE THREE

*Performers in turkey costumes. Can be sung or recited.*

**ACTOR:** A selection from Songsforteachers.org.

**ALL:** Four little turkeys standing in a row.  
First little turkey said, "I don't want to grow."  
Second little turkey said, "What do you know?"  
Third little turkey said, "Thanksgiving is near."  
Fourth little turkey said, "Yes, that's what I hear."

Then the four little turkeys that were standing in a row,  
All said together...

"Come on, let's go!"

**ALL:** Two little Injun's foolin' with a gun,  
One shot t'other and then there was one;  
One little Injun' left all alone;  
He went out and hanged himself and then there were none.

Four fat turkeys sitting on the gate.





JOAN MARCUS

Margo Seibert, Greg Keller, Jennifer Bareilles and Jeffrey Bean in the Playwrights Horizons production, directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel.

The first one said, "Oh my, it's getting late!"  
The second one said, "Thanksgiving is our fate."

The third one said, "Here comes the farmer with his gun!"

All said together...

"Run, run, run!"

*They scatter. BAM! BAM! BAM! As each gunshot is heard another turkey "dies." One is left alone. She dodges right, left, ducks and finally...BAM! She's down.*

**ACTOR:** Teacher's comment: For fun, try having students sing "Injun" instead of "Indian." My students loved it.

#### SCENE FOUR

*Alicia and Caden have snacks.*

**CADEN:** So you just moved here?

**ALICIA:** Yeah.

**CADEN:** What part of town are you in?

**ALICIA:** I don't know.

**CADEN:** I grew up here. If you want to know anything about anything I can probably tell you.

**ALICIA:** Anything?

**CADEN:** Anything about this town.

**ALICIA:** Oh.

**CADEN:** But if there's anything else you want to know about I could look it up for you. I'm really good at research.

**ALICIA:** That's sweet.

**CADEN:** Do you want my number or whatever?

**ALICIA:** I don't know if I'll be here long.

**CADEN:** Don't like to count your chickens before they hatch?

**ALICIA:** I thought we're doing turkeys.

*She eats her snacks then looks at the ceiling. Caden goes over his notes.*

*Jaxton brings Logan her water bottle.*

**LOGAN:** I've already screwed this up.

**JAXTON:** We can fix it. I looked over your Native American Heritage Month grant and it doesn't explicitly say you have to use it for a Native American person.

**LOGAN:** Really?

**JAXTON:** As long as we do something that honors Native Americans for November, you're good to keep the money.

**LOGAN:** That doesn't seem right. Besides I really wanted to have a Native American voice in this play.

**JAXTON:** Didn't you check her enrollment card or something?

**LOGAN:** It's illegal to ask about ethnic, gender or religious identification in the hiring process. Which I totally support.

**JAXTON:** But it was pretty obvious that she's not Native.

**LOGAN:** You thought she was.

**JAXTON:** I could tell something was off. She's not centered enough. If it's so important to you, we can add a Native actor. A real one.

**LOGAN:** None applied.

**JAXTON:** I find it hard to believe there aren't any Native American actors around here.

**LOGAN:** Have you ever seen one? I don't have the time or resources to go door to door to find one. Alicia cost a lot of money.

It's harder to be a mentor to her than I thought it would be.

**JAXTON:** She does have a ton of conventional beauty and sex appeal.

**LOGAN:** Jaxton!

**JAXTON:** I'm not saying I'm into that, but she has a lot to overcome. It will take time.

**LOGAN:** Despite all that, do you think we could still use her as Native American and call it color-blind casting?

**JAXTON:** I think we could get away with using her a few years ago, but now we're post the post-racial society. We can't be blind to differences.

**LOGAN:** Right. Before we were blind to race but now we totally see it. It's our duty as allies.

**JAXTON:** Yes. And as allies we need to say something for those who can't be here to speak for themselves.

**LOGAN:** Or, is it as allies we need to be sure they are here to speak for themselves?

**JAXTON:** That's what I'm saying.

**LOGAN:** So if they aren't here, does anyone speak for them?

**JAXTON:** I don't think we're supposed to



speak for anyone but ourselves.

**LOGAN:** Right. So we just speak for white people?

**JAXTON:** I think so. We see color but we don't speak for it.

**LOGAN:** Which means Alicia can't play Native American, for sure?

**JAXTON:** Definitely not.

**LOGAN:** But can we really say that? Then we're speaking for Native American people who aren't here.

**JAXTON:** Maybe we should tell a Native American person and see if they say it.

**LOGAN:** Yes of course. *(Thinks)* But I don't know any Native Americans.

**JAXTON:** A guy in my yoga class built a sweat lodge on his deck so he probably knows a local Native American person. He made it totally traditional.

**LOGAN:** That means he used dead animal skin to cover it didn't he?

**JAXTON:** Yes, but it's all up-cycled leather from jackets he gets on Etsy.

**LOGAN:** That helps.

But your friend's not Native American?

**JAXTON:** No, he learned how to build it at Burning Man. But I'm sure he's had a Native American person to the lodge. Wait, he's at a yoga retreat in Machu Picchu. No phones allowed.

**LOGAN:** Well then, I guess in the absence of any Native American people, we should make a decision, for the good of the school system, so they don't get in trouble.

**JAXTON:** Right, then we're technically still speaking on behalf of white people because we're speaking for the school administration.

**LOGAN:** Yes. That sounds right. We're white people speaking for white people.

**JAXTON:** OK.

**LOGAN:** We can do that.

**JAXTON:** Absolutely.

**LOGAN** *(To the group):* We're back people. After some thinking I have decided that we cannot use non-Native American people to play Native American characters.

**CADEN:** So there won't be any Native Americans in a Thanksgiving play for Native American Month?

**JAXTON:** It's the right thing to do.

**ALICIA:** What part will I play?

**LOGAN:** A Pilgrim.

**ALICIA:** But I'm maybe part Spanish so I should have the biggest parts in the Florida and Texas stories.

**LOGAN:** We aren't going to do those stories.

**ALICIA:** Why not?

**CADEN:** Yes, why not?

**LOGAN:** Because there aren't any white people

in them and we've got a cast of white people.

**ALICIA:** In this country if you're part anything else, you're not white. It's a drop thing. *(To Caden)* If I'm Spanish I'm not white, right?

**CADEN:** I think that depends on the region of origin. I'm not an expert on—

*Alicia gives him a look.*

**CADEN:** I'll do the research and get back to you.

**LOGAN:** The ethical thing to do is to play what we know we are.

**ALICIA:** I was promised a large part.

**LOGAN:** My Gender Equity in History Grant requires a lead female historical figure, so that will be you.

**ALICIA:** Good.

**LOGAN:** This is a challenge, but we are the future of theatre and education. Are we all in agreement?

**JAXTON:** Support.

**ALICIA:** *Main* Pilgrim.

**LOGAN:** Yes. Caden?

**CADEN:** I'll defend you to the school board if I have to.

**LOGAN:** OK then, no Native Americans in our Thanksgiving play. Let's start with an improv. We'll use the traditional story we all know. Just see where it goes.

**CADEN:** That story isn't necessarily historically accurate.

**LOGAN:** We need to get our creative juices flowing and figure out what our options are to celebrate Native Americans without them. Let's act.

*Jaxton, Alicia and Caden turn in circles a bit, not sure where to face.*

**ALICIA:** Which way is downstage?

**LOGAN:** It doesn't matter in an improv. You just react.

*They wander a bit, not able to define a space.*

**LOGAN:** Let's put the audience here.

*They all face Logan downstage and fall into line.*

**LOGAN:** You're at a Pilgrim's house preparing the meal for the first Thanksgiving.

*They move chairs around.*

**ALICIA:** I feel like it's my house.

**LOGAN:** Fine. Let's leave the rest of the discoveries for the improv.

*They mime preparing foods. Perhaps some butchering, get creative.*

**JAXTON:** Wait. Didn't we get this food from Native American people?

**ALICIA:** Yeah, isn't that the whole point of Thanksgiving? To thank the Native people for saving us from...something...with food?

**CADEN:** Starvation.

**ALICIA:** We should totally thank them for that.

**JAXTON:** Why are we fixing this food if it was a gift?

**LOGAN:** The Pilgrims must have done some

of the actual preparation.

**JAXTON:** But without any Native American people to guide them?

**CADEN:** Actually—

**LOGAN:** OK, you're sitting down to eat the dinner that is already prepared.

*Alicia sits across from Jaxton and Caden. They mime eating. Again, mime this for growing physical comedy as they struggle with the scene.*

**ALICIA:** Would you like more stuffing?

**CADEN:** Stuffing is a modern dish. A more likely side considering the efficiency of the early settlers would be a type of sweetbreads or pâté.

**LOGAN:** Caden, we call improv a world of yes. We don't judge or try to make sense of choices, we simply say "yes" and see where it leads us.

**CADEN:** So sorry. *(To Alicia)* Yes, I would love some, what did you call it? Stuffing?

**ALICIA:** I was mistaken. It's corn. Native American corn.

**CADEN:** Thank you.

**JAXTON:** This meal is wonderful.

**ALICIA:** Without our Native American neighbors...in the next room, we would be dead. From starvation.

**CADEN** *(Pleased):* Yes. We owe them thanks.

**ALICIA:** I thanked them.

**JAXTON:** Good.

*They mime-eat in silence. For a while.*

**ALICIA:** We should say a prayer of Thanksgiving.

**LOGAN:** Public schools.

**ALICIA:** What?

**LOGAN:** We can't pray in public schools.

**ALICIA** *(To Caden):* Pilgrims are religious. Right?

**CADEN:** Yes!

**ALICIA:** Brother Jaxton, would you say a prayer of thanks?

**JAXTON:** O...K. Um...Dear...Father. Shouldn't we wait to say the prayer until our Native...um...brothers— What should we call them?

**LOGAN:** Indigenous people?

**CADEN:** The truth is in the writings from this time, they were referred to as "savages." But we can't say that in a school show. We could call them "the Natives." As in they are native to this land.

**JAXTON:** OK. But my point was going to be, we should have our Native brothers in the room to say the Thanksgiving prayer.

**ALICIA:** Yes. Let's wait for them. More... vegetable?

**CADEN:** Thank you.

*More mime. Silence.*

**LOGAN:** And scene. We can't pray, and we



can't do a hero story without the hero.

**JAXTON:** It's weird.

**CADEN:** Somehow we need Indians.

*They think.*

**ALICIA:** A dream sequence.

**JAXTON:** How does that help?

**ALICIA:** My character can dream that she is a Native person. And I'll play me because it's my dream.

**CADEN:** I think that's still redface.

**ALICIA:** I'm not Native. I'm a Pilgrim dreaming Native. It's totally different.

**CADEN:** Well...

**JAXTON:** Technically she would still be in redface, but we're not hiding that she's in redface.

**LOGAN:** It's meta, so maybe it's OK.

**JAXTON:** I think so.

**ALICIA:** Why are you the ones who get to decide everything?

**LOGAN:** As enlightened white allies, Jaxton and I have put a lot of thought into these issues.

**JAXTON:** Like every day of our lives. We can't escape our whiteness.

**ALICIA:** But I play white. I can decide things too.

**JAXTON:** Yeah but I'm a straight. White. Male. It's an endless minefield.

**CADEN:** I'm straight too. Funnily I am Italian which used to be considered ethnic but is now white.

**JAXTON:** Whoa, this whole thing must be bringing up a lot of sensitivity issues for you. For being one of Christopher Columbus's bros.

**CADEN:** I'm not related to Columbus.

**JAXTON:** But you have the awareness that your people started the slavery and genocide of millions.

**CADEN:** That's not all Columbus did.

**JAXTON:** You're balancing karma. We uplift the celebration of Native American Heritage Month, and Columbus Day inches a little closer to oblivion.

**CADEN:** Well, Columbus Day is actually a celebration of the contributions of Italians to—

**JAXTON:** Then why not Mussolini Day? Or—

**LOGAN:** Focus people. The new idea on the table is that Alicia will dream that she is Native American, thus allowing a Native point of view in the piece. Do we have consensus?

**JAXTON:** I guess.

**CADEN:** Yes.

**ALICIA:** You know what would be great? If it was like me talking to myself. Like Native me talking to Pilgrim me. Helping me see the beauty and bounty of this land.

*Jaxton pulls out his phone and looks at it through the following:*

**LOGAN:** So you are proposing that this whole

section is just you?

**ALICIA:** I can tell the other characters about my dream in the morning.

**LOGAN:** Then it's just monologues.

**ALICIA:** Some amazing plays are mostly monologues. Like *The Vagina Monologues*.

**CADEN:** As an elementary school teacher I can say with authority that monologues put children to sleep. Sorry.

**JAXTON:** What we need is conflict. I was just Googling and things weren't so chill between the Pilgrims and the Indians. I mean, obviously, the Pilgrims were land stealers like Columbus. But they were totally in the middle of some very specific battles.

**ALICIA:** So you guys can battle Native me in my dream.

**JAXTON:** Or we can all be white people, Pilgrims, preparing for a battle. War is intense. Kids dig that.

**CADEN:** I brought a dramatic, post-battle scene that only involves white people, technically.

**JAXTON:** Sweet.

**LOGAN:** We're celebrating violence?

**JAXTON:** Maybe my character is conflicted about fighting the Indians.

*(To Alicia)* Good wife, I'm so conflicted about the impending war.

*She slides up next to him, very cozy.*

**ALICIA:** Let me soothe you, dear husband.

**LOGAN:** Maybe she's your sister! Or your platonic friend?

**ALICIA:** Oh, you're a couple. I did not get that.

**LOGAN:** Jaxton and I share a mutually respectful relationship.

**ALICIA:** So you aren't a couple?

**LOGAN:** New plan. We are going to divide and conquer. Sorry. Alicia and I will work on her dream idea. Jaxton and Caden work on the battle idea.

**JAXTON:** Wait. Isn't it inappropriate for us to split along gender lines?

**CADEN:** I'll work with Alicia.

**LOGAN:** But is it more inappropriate for us to intentionally not split along gender lines?

**JAXTON:** I don't know.

**LOGAN:** The impetus was creative interest, so I think it's OK.

**JAXTON:** But two men doing the war stuff? Isn't that playing into gender assumptions that we want to disrupt?

**LOGAN:** But it's period so we're being historically accurate.

**JAXTON:** Right.

**LOGAN:** Yes.

**JAXTON:** Sorry.

**LOGAN:** No, thanks for always being conscious.

**CADEN:** Are there any props or costumes here?

**LOGAN:** There's a few.

**JAXTON (To Caden):** The good stuff is out in the storage closet. Come on.

*Jaxton grabs the key.*

**CADEN:** Great.

*The men go.*

**LOGAN:** Alicia, I want to be sure there are no hard feelings in what just happened with the Native American casting, redface thing. I don't blame you at all, and I hope you understand why we had to make this decision.

**ALICIA:** You're the director, it's your show.

**LOGAN:** No, it's our show. Really. I want you to feel as empowered as possible. I've been a female actor in L.A.

**ALICIA:** You lived in L.A.?

**LOGAN:** For six weeks. My time in L.A. was... hard. But since then I've seen how it's not us, as women, but the business that makes us believe in the lies of beauty and sex.

**ALICIA:** But sex is a real thing.

**LOGAN:** Yes, but believing that your value is tied to your ability to portray sex and beauty is a lie.

**ALICIA:** You don't think I'm beautiful?

**LOGAN:** Well, yes. In the way our society defines beauty and attaches worth to it. I realize now that my own beauty is from the inside. We are all beautiful.

**ALICIA:** Of course you are.

**LOGAN:** You see my inner beauty?

**ALICIA:** No. I mean you're really pretty. You just hide it. But I could help you. It would only take a little makeup to highlight your eyes and add some lift to your hair and you'd be gorgeous.

**LOGAN:** Not gorgeous.

**ALICIA:** Sure. Change up the cut of your clothes, add a hair flip and Jaxton won't be able to keep his hands off you.

**LOGAN:** I've never understood the hair flip.

**ALICIA:** It's easy. You just flip.

*She does it. Logan tries to copy her.*

**ALICIA:** You've got it! It shows your neck. Makes guys want to kiss it.

*Logan recovers herself.*

**LOGAN:** OK. Enough hair flipping. What I want to tell you is that since L.A., I quit acting because I realized that I could be so much more. I became a director so that I could show off the power of my mind. I'm a teacher so that I can change the future. I have plans, dreams. Jaxton has helped me stay focused on that path and I want to get you on it too.

**ALICIA:** My boyfriend helped me. But he dropped me from his agency so I dropped him from my life and moved out.

**LOGAN:** Good for you.

**ALICIA:** I mean if he's not getting me work



then he's not getting sex. Right?

**LOGAN:** Um...there it is. You certainly should never feel pressured into sex or like it's a commodity.

**ALICIA:** Not unless I'm getting something good for it.

**LOGAN:** Well—

**ALICIA:** You've had sex, right?

**LOGAN:** Yes. But...you know what? As your employer we shouldn't even be talking about this. Now you're going to be a writer. You have so many more options for your future.

**ALICIA:** Look, I'm not that smart—

**LOGAN:** Don't say that.

**ALICIA:** No, really, I'm not. I've been tested. But I know how to make people stare at me and not look away. And when I say something onstage, people listen and they believe me.

But this history stuff and writing, I don't know how to do that. So if you want to make me feel empowered or whatever, let me do what I know how to do and don't force me to do something that makes me feel stupid.

**LOGAN:** But I am here to help you. Teach you.

**ALICIA:** I don't want to learn.

**LOGAN:** Seriously?

**ALICIA:** I'm happy doing my thing.

**LOGAN:** You have no ambition to be more than an actor?

**ALICIA:** What's wrong with being an actress?

**LOGAN:** Nothing. I just—I don't believe I've ever met a person without ambition. Not in any aspect of my life.

**ALICIA:** I'm ambitious. I want to do more acting.

**LOGAN:** Wow. You are certainly the most... simple person I've ever met.

**ALICIA:** I'm not smart but I'm definitely not simpleminded.

**LOGAN:** No. Simplicity is difficult. Multitasking, constantly trying to be something more, everyone does that. But to *be* simplicity, that's unbelievably difficult.

**ALICIA:** Not really. I just...don't do stuff I don't want to do and do the stuff I do.

**LOGAN:** You're talking directly to me and I can barely wrap my brain around it. I've never, for one moment in my life, been content.

**ALICIA:** I'm content all the time. Except when my agent dropped me but then I dumped him and felt fine.

**LOGAN:** Teach me how to be content.

**ALICIA:** Right now?

**LOGAN:** Please. You have no idea how stressed I am. But if I can get my reputation back with the parents and they withdraw that petition, next year I could— See, I'm doing it already. I'm already worried about next year's production and we just started this

one. Help me be content with this moment I'm in. We're in, together.

**ALICIA:** Well, basically you don't do anything.

**LOGAN:** That's it?

**ALICIA:** Like normally in rehearsal if they are working on someone else's scene, I just sit here. Or play Angry Birds on my phone, but I forgot my charger so I don't want to wear down the battery.

**LOGAN:** So you meditate? Or think about... what?

**ALICIA:** Nothing. Sometimes I'll look out the window. Or I'll study the ceiling. People leave you alone when you study the ceiling.

**LOGAN:** OK.

**ALICIA:** So now we just do it.

**LOGAN:** Now?

**ALICIA:** Uh-huh.

*Alicia sits back and stares at the ceiling. Logan studies her a bit then tries to do the same.*

**LOGAN:** Do you count tiles or...

**ALICIA:** Nope, just stare at it.

**LOGAN:** Right.

*Logan struggles to keep staring.*

**LOGAN:** I can't turn my brain off.

**ALICIA:** Maybe you're too smart to be content.

**LOGAN:** I am smart. I've been tested too.

**ALICIA:** I can tell.

**LOGAN:** So I can't be content?

**ALICIA:** I've never seen a smart person that is.

**LOGAN:** You're a lucky woman Alicia.

**ALICIA:** I think so.

**LOGAN:** You're also wise. You're sure you're not Native American?

**ALICIA:** Yep. Do you want me to work on my dream monologues?

**LOGAN:** No, you don't have to write anything.

**ALICIA:** Cool.

**LOGAN:** I need a break. Keep doing...nothing.

**ALICIA:** Got it.

*Alicia resumes staring at the ceiling as Logan goes. The guys return.*

**JAXTON:** Logan, are there any swords in here?

**LOGAN:** No.

**CADEN:** Period rifles?

**LOGAN:** Nope.

**CADEN:** We'll have to make do.

*She goes as the men shuffle through Caden's papers.*

## SCENE FIVE

*Two performers sing as a Pilgrim and a Native.*

**ACTOR:** Youtube.com/eastsidemiddleschoolfortheperformingarts/thanksgivingassembly.

**NATIVE** (Tune: "This Land Is Your Land"):

This land is your land, this land is

**BOTH:** My land

**PILGRIM:** From California, to the New York Island

**NATIVE:** From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters

This land was made for you and—

**PILGRIM:** Me!

**NATIVE** (Tune: "O Give Me a Home"):

O give me a home where the buffalo roam,  
Where the deer and the antelope play,  
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,  
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

**PILGRIM** (Tune: "O Give Me a Home"):

The red man was pressed from this part of the west,

He's likely no more to return,

To the banks of the Red River where seldom if ever

Their flickering campfires burn.

**NATIVE** (Tune: "My Country 'Tis of Thee"):

My country 'tis of thee,

Sweet land of liberty,

Of thee I sing.

Land where my fathers died!

**PILGRIM** (Tune: "My Country 'Tis of Thee"):

Land of the Pilgrim's pride!

From every mountain side,

**NATIVE & PILGRIM:** Let freedom ring!

**ACTOR:** Public comment: nine months ago.

Are those really the lyrics? The "red man"? That's horrible.

**ACTOR 2:** Look it up, it's historical. Quit being so sensitive.

## SCENE SIX

**CADEN:** But without the battle scene first—

**JAXTON:** Trust me, I think the real impact is in the scene after the battle. Back at the fort.

**CADEN:** Colony.

**JAXTON:** The Pilgrim Palace.

**CADEN:** Actually it was quite spartan.

**JAXTON:** Seriously man, you gotta loosen up on the facts.

**CADEN:** But facts are...facts. They don't loosen or tighten. They just are.

**JAXTON:** For now we gotta zero in on a compelling story, then we'll put all the facts in that you think we need, OK?

**CADEN:** Fine.

**JAXTON:** You've got a lot of scenes here.

**CADEN:** Thanks. Playwriting is a secret dream of mine.

**JAXTON:** You told us that in like the first two minutes.

**CADEN:** You're the only ones that know. And all of my students.

**JAXTON:** Gotta give voice to your dreams. Speak your truth and it will become truth.

**CADEN:** Well, I don't know that it actually works like—

**JAXTON:** Facts kill dreams.

**CADEN:** Well...





Chris Harder (Caden) and Michael O'Connell (Jaxton) in the Artists Repertory Theatre production in Portland, Ore., directed by Luan Schooler.

**JAXTON:** Do you know what I said I wanted to be when I grow up? An actor slash yoga dude.

**CADEN:** Like teach yoga?

**JAXTON:** Just be yoga. People told me that was crazy. It's not a "real" profession. But I said it anyway and here I am. I act and I do yoga. I spoke my truth. It became truth.

**CADEN:** That's seriously all you do?

**JAXTON:** Those are my passions.

**CADEN:** You get paid for your passions?

**JAXTON:** I have a day job, but that's not what's important in the story of me. Look, this homecoming scene of yours is the key.

**CADEN:** I don't think Logan will like it.

**JAXTON:** It's a devised piece. She doesn't have to like everything.

*Logan returns. Perhaps she has cleaned up a bit, added some lipstick. Something Alicia.*

**JAXTON:** Lo, we've got a scene that has me so stoked.

**LOGAN:** Wow. That was fast. Great.

**JAXTON:** Caden's got like a whole play written. It just needs a little trimming and we could do it. Devising process done.

**LOGAN:** But what about our input?

**CADEN:** I can work in whatever Alicia's got.

**ALICIA:** Logan said I don't have to write anything. I'm being simplicity.

**CADEN:** Ummm...

**LOGAN:** I'm supporting Alicia in staying with her strengths. She knows what she does

well and I want to honor that. It's so...brave and Zen really. Jaxton, she has absolutely no desire to be more. She's like you but way further down the path because she doesn't have intellect in her way.

**JAXTON:** Wait, like me?

**LOGAN:** Free. You yoga and sometimes act and just live. Alicia just acts. Nothing else.

**ALICIA:** I do do stuff. Sometimes.

**LOGAN:** But you don't NEED to do stuff. I'm telling you Jaxton. It's genius. Only she's not. That's not being offensive, she's been tested.

**ALICIA:** It's true.

**LOGAN:** I had it all wrong. She is here to mentor us.

**JAXTON:** Well, our scene is incredibly... simplicity. It strikes at the core of the Native American gestalt with one visual. It's quite brilliant.

**CADEN:** Thank you Jaxton.

**JAXTON:** There's lots of clunky educational dialogue but we'll fix that.

**CADEN:** Oh.

*Jaxton grabs his props, a bag with something large in it and various costume pieces. He nods to Caden.*

**CADEN:** The year is 1631. Upon landing in Cape Cod the Separatists, now known as Pilgrims, immediately robbed the graves and nearly all of the food stores of the local Natives. However, with the help of Samoset, the English-speaking Native who had escaped

slavery, a tenuous treaty was drawn. But, six years and many ships later, when the Separatists discovered a white man dead on a boat in Plymouth they assumed the Native people had killed him. Major John Mason—*Jaxton steps forward.*

**CADEN:** Gathered his men and surrounded an unsuspecting Pequot village. They killed four hundred Native men, women and children. Major Mason and his men came home to give thanks and celebrate their victory.

**JAXTON:** Do not fear good God-fearing folk. We have in short order laid waste to the savage villains. Prepare a feast most glorious and give thanks to God for he hath delivered our resounding victory. I bring forth the trophies of our labors.

*Out of his bag he pulls two crafted heads that have long dark hair. They are oozing a red blood like liquid. He drops them on the ground. Blood sprays.*

**LOGAN:** Wait. Are those heads?

**CADEN:** Native American heads.

**JAXTON:** We shall give sport with the heads of our enemies on this day of thanks.

**CADEN:** Yes we shall!

*Jaxton kicks a head to Caden.*

**LOGAN:** Oh my God!

**ALICIA:** I wanna play!

*They ad-lib as they toss and kick the heads between them. Something is knocked over; Logan is horrified.*

**LOGAN:** Don't touch that Alicia!



**ALICIA:** Frozen turkey bowling!

*Alicia jumps up and rolls a head into something. Heads fly around the stage leaving blood everywhere.*

**LOGAN:** STOP!!

*They stop.*

**LOGAN:** Have you lost your minds? How is killing off hundreds of Indigenous people then kicking their heads a proper celebration of Native American Heritage Month?

**CADEN:** It's true, and gets a Native American presence into our play.

**JAXTON:** It's like those programs in high school where they make you visit a prison to stay out of prisons and see a crashed car to stay out of drunk driver cars and visit a morgue to...stay out of morgues.

**LOGAN:** This is appalling.

**JAXTON:** But it's real. That's what we need, not a cleansing of history but an in-your-face reminder that this is what we're capable of or we will keep doing it.

**CADEN:** Exactly.

**LOGAN:** If I do a gruesome play where you kick heads for sport, I will lose my job for sure.

**JAXTON:** But the genocide on Turtle Island is ongoing. If we white people don't admit the horrors of what we did and are still doing, it won't stop.

**LOGAN:** First off, this is public school, the growing majority of these kids aren't white anyway. Second, petition or not, I will be fired. We aren't doing this. I'm the director. I've decided.

**JAXTON:** Lo, it's devised theatre.

**LOGAN:** Jaxton, I made it clear from the beginning that in this format I will have final say.

**JAXTON:** Yeah but—

**LOGAN:** I said no!

**JAXTON:** You're being a bitch—bit dictatorial about it.

**LOGAN:** That is an incredibly offensive gender-biased statement.

**JAXTON:** I went by the pronoun "ze" for a full year. I'm allowed one mistake.

**LOGAN:** That wasn't a mistake. You've always been jealous of me because I'm a theatre professional and you aren't.

**JAXTON:** You teach high school theatre.

**LOGAN:** You are a street performer.

**JAXTON:** I'm a local celebrity.

**ALICIA:** Really?

**LOGAN:** Actually yes. But I believe that you, as a fellow human, are having difficulty with the inequity of our professional relationship and are lashing out.

*Logan executes a fantastic hair flip. Alicia is proud.*

**ALICIA:** Good girl.

*Jaxton has a realization.*

**JAXTON:** Dude. I *am* feeling a tension in my positional relationship to you.

**LOGAN:** I'm sorry I had to call it out like that.

**JAXTON:** Whoa. I think this is what "less than" feels like.

**LOGAN:** I don't think of you as less than me.

**JAXTON:** You called me a street performer.

**LOGAN:** Well, you are. But if saying it in that tone offended you I am sorry for the results you felt even though that wasn't my intention.

**CADEN:** I think it was.

**JAXTON:** It was. And that is a profound gift. Do you know how hard it is for a straight white male to feel "less than" in this world? I don't know that I've ever truly felt it in my life.

**CADEN:** I have.

**JAXTON:** I don't want to lose this feeling. Say it again.

**LOGAN:** Seriously?

**JAXTON:** Please, help me Lo.

**LOGAN:** Um...you're a street performer?

**JAXTON:** Come on, give it to me.

**LOGAN:** You're a street performer.

**JAXTON:** If you care about me, hit me with it.

**LOGAN:** You're a bad street performer!

**JAXTON:** Yes!

**LOGAN:** The school board said I didn't have to hire you but you work for free!

**JAXTON:** More!

**LOGAN:** You're a terrible actor.

**JAXTON:** Hurt me!

**LOGAN:** And the sex is so—

**JAXTON:** Back off!

**LOGAN:** Bizarre! Why do you do—

**JAXTON:** Too far!

**LOGAN:** Sorry!

**JAXTON:** I should go meditate on this feeling right now.

**LOGAN:** Should we talk about...

*Jaxton sits to meditate.*

**JAXTON:** OMMMMMMM.

**LOGAN:** Maybe we should all meditate for a moment.

**ALICIA:** Umm...

**LOGAN:** Just keep doing nothing.

**ALICIA:** Got it.

*Logan and Jaxton take meditation positions. Alicia sits back and stares at the ceiling. Caden isn't sure what to do. He tries an asana, not great. Finally he sits in a chair and puts his head down on a desk.*

## SCENE SEVEN

*The agitprop version. Don't get too earnest, let the appropriation fly.*

**ACTOR:** Teaching Thanksgiving in a Socially Responsible Way: Lesson plan for grades 9–12.

**ALL:** Where?

Plymouth Massachusetts

When?

Thanksgiving 1997

Who?

The United American Indians of New England.

And the local police.

What?

Since 1970 a National Day of Mourning has been observed with a march at noon.

In 1997 police attempted to disband the march with tear gas and violent arrests.

Twenty-five people were arrested, many injured.

Medical attention was not immediately provided to those under arrest.

The police characterized the protesters as "terrorists" who should be treated accordingly.

Why?

*Silence.*

**ACTOR:** Final Assignment: Have students write letters of apology to the Indians. Then, read them to each other.

## SCENE EIGHT

**LOGAN:** I've got it! Sorry. When you folk are done.

**CADEN:** I'm good.

**ALICIA:** Whatever.

**JAXTON:** Om.

**LOGAN:** We'll start and Jaxton can join us. I want to try a Pilgrim-style Thanksgiving scene but we show the actual erasure of Native people. Graphically.

**CADEN:** I thought the scene with the heads was pretty graphic.

**LOGAN:** Graphic in a visceral way, not a visual one. We do a first Thanksgiving scene, like normal with Native people, but we don't play Native people. We allow their absence to speak for them. Where is the missing Indigenous perspective? It's certainly missing from this room. We hold space for them by literally holding space for them. Give me a few minutes to work out some dialogue.

**CADEN:** I have a dinner scene I was holding on to. No death or Spaniards. Just the "normal" story we all know.

**LOGAN:** Let me see it.

*Caden looks through a large stack.*

**LOGAN:** You actually wrote the whole play didn't you?

**CADEN:** There's nothing that means more to me in my life than this opportunity.

**LOGAN:** Thanks for this work. All of it Caden.

**CADEN:** Here it is!

*He hands Logan a scene.*



**LOGAN:** Everyone take a break while I figure this out.

*Logan goes somewhere to work on it.*

*Jaxton joins Caden and Alicia at the snacks.*

**JAXTON:** That meditation was deep. I faced a lot about myself and my privilege.

**CADEN:** I don't know if I could hear my girlfriend say that kind of stuff about me and be OK with it.

**JAXTON:** I know that her lashing out is not about her and me but actually her double X's fighting back against centuries of patriarchal oppression. It's not personal. It felt personal for a second, which I totally needed, but intellectually I know to filter anything she says to me through layers of justified feminine rage.

**CADEN:** So no matter what she says, you don't believe it?

**JAXTON:** I believe she believes it, but I know to trust myself first. And not everyone is ready for Tantric, right? *(To Alicia)* You play oppressed characters a lot, how do you get in touch with that as a person of privilege?

**ALICIA:** I imagine I'm that character so I feel what they feel.

**JAXTON:** But do you use substitution technique from your own life or method or what?

**ALICIA:** I pretend to be them.

**JAXTON:** That's it?

**ALICIA:** Yeah. And I can make myself cry on command.

**JAXTON:** Like in a scene?

**ALICIA:** No. Right now.

*Alicia literally cries tears.*

**JAXTON:** Whoa.

**CADEN:** That is impressive.

*She stops.*

**ALICIA:** I list it on my special skills. People ask me to do it in auditions all the time.

**JAXTON:** I'm getting what Logan was saying about you. You're so...simple.

**ALICIA:** She called me simplicity.

**JAXTON:** That's it. You should teach workshops. People would dig that.

**ALICIA:** It seems like either you have simplicity or you don't. Smart people don't get it. I just tried with Logan and she couldn't do it.

**JAXTON:** So I'm probably too smart?

**ALICIA:** Maybe. He is for sure.

**CADEN:** I'm OK with that.

**JAXTON:** But still, you could charge people money to come listen to you.

**ALICIA:** That's what I do now. I'm an actress.

**JAXTON:** You are blowing my mind. Seriously. Mind blown.

**ALICIA:** No one's ever said that to me before when I had my clothes on.

*Jaxton and Caden register this.*

**JAXTON:** I can't formulate a response that

isn't not misogynistic.

*Alicia smiles.*

**ALICIA:** Simplicity.

*Logan rejoins them.*

**LOGAN:** OK, this is experimental but that's what I love about theatre for kids. You can really do anything and they will follow you. We'll sit around the table of the first Thanksgiving. Our Native friends are at the end.

*They arrange chairs and sit with two empty ones.*

**LOGAN:** First time through let's read all the lines. I'll read both Samoset and Massasoit. *She moves back and forth between the chairs as she does Samoset's or Massasoit's lines. Caden tends to mouth the words along with them.*

**ALICIA:** Good Native king and good interpreter, welcome on this day of the good Lord's Feast of Thanksgiving. What may I offer to make your visit pleasing?

**LOGAN:** I Samoset whilst request more of the fowl your men gathered with their exploding sticks.

**ALICIA:** Wouldest thou prefer the breast or the leg?

**LOGAN:** Massasoit, which part of the bird is most pleasing to your countenance? *(Switching chairs as Massasoit)* That which is most succulent pleaseth me.

**ALICIA:** The breast is ample whilst the leg is moist.

**JAXTON:** Dear wife, our gratitude is owed these men a thousand times. Please, take the whole between you.

**CADEN:** Yes, we wouldest have died as did so many of our number.

**LOGAN:** Scene. Great work everyone.

*Caden is overcome with emotion or heartburn.*

**JAXTON:** Dude, are you OK?

**CADEN:** It just hit me. I read my words with real actors. This is the best day of my life!

**JAXTON:** Most people go their whole lives without living their dreams, but you put yourself out there.

**LOGAN:** I'm thrilled to facilitate this moment for you Caden. I'd like to take a second to honor your emotional space. *(They all do)* And do it again.

**CADEN:** It would help to hear it with better acting this time. *(To Jaxton and Alicia)* I think some context of why you two are so grateful might help you get the emotional arc—

**JAXTON:** Not cool.

**LOGAN:** Caden, it's customary that actors do not give each other notes. Any notes come through the director.

**CADEN:** Just trying to be helpful. There was something missing last time.

**ALICIA:** Want me to cry at the end?

**CADEN:** That would be great.

**LOGAN:** OK. Let's read it again and see what happens. This time when we get to the Native lines, I won't read them but we look at the space and listen as if the Native characters are there.

**ALICIA:** But they aren't.

**LOGAN:** We're pretending.

**ALICIA:** Oh. I can do that.

Good Native king and good interpreter, welcome on this day of the good Lord's Feast of Thanksgiving. What may I offer to make your visit pleasing?

*They look to a chair in silence. Alicia can't help but go sex kittenish. It's a reflex. The group's attention is drawn to her like moths to a flame.*

**ALICIA:** Wouldest thou prefer the breast or the leg?

*Silence again.*

**ALICIA:** The breast is ample whilst the leg is moist.

*Jaxton bursts into giggles.*

**ALICIA:** What?

**JAXTON:** Ample breast, moist legs?

*Alicia laughs.*

**CADEN:** Only those with juvenile humor would find this pleasant exchange about food humorous.

**JAXTON:** Our audience is all juveniles.

**LOGAN:** *Juvenile* humor aside, I think it really worked. Notice how in the moments of silence, we were all totally focused. It was so impactful.

**ALICIA:** I felt that.

**JAXTON:** But can we do a whole play like that?

**LOGAN:** It's applicable to our contemporary situation. Erased presence.

**CADEN:** Although the acting was great. It wasn't as strong for me as the first time with all of the lines.

**LOGAN:** This is very early discovery, we're playing.

**CADEN:** Perhaps we could do it like a ventriloquist. Still keep the visual nothingness but say their lines. Alicia, do this part with me.

**ALICIA:** Good Native king and good interpreter, welcome on this day of the good Lord's Feast of Thanksgiving. What may I offer to make your visit pleasing?

**CADEN** *(Poorly done ventriloquist voice):* I Samoset whilst request more of the fowl your men gathered with their exploding sticks.

**JAXTON** *(Giggling):* Exploding sticks. Caden, you horny man. You wrote a sex comedy.

**CADEN:** I did not!

**LOGAN:** Please stop talking about sex.

**JAXTON:** I'm simply naming what's in the room.

**LOGAN:** It's a children's show.



**JAXTON:** Caden wrote a sex comedy. And I, as a heteronormative male, recognize and honor the power of Alicia's sacral chakra. *(To Alicia)* Oh yeah, I'll give you something to feast on. *Alicia catches on and plays the part.*

**ALICIA:** Partake of my generous bounty good sir.

**JAXTON:** Let your rich sauces run down my chin.

**ALICIA:** Whilst thou have me carve the breast?

**JAXTON:** Wait, what?

**LOGAN:** That's enough. Caden, the voice takes away from the idea of erased presence. Know what I mean?

**CADEN:** I don't think the erased presence works as well as the lines I wrote.

**JAXTON:** He's right Lo, the silence is wrong.

**LOGAN:** Why are you fighting me?

**JAXTON:** By silencing the Native voices we've made them too strong. Silence is so powerful onstage. Our characters can't compete with that.

**LOGAN:** But we want the silence to be strong. The nothingness of the Natives is the whole point.

**JAXTON:** So it's an inequality.

**LOGAN:** Yes.

**JAXTON:** Then are we being fair to the Pilgrims?

**CADEN:** Separatists.

**JAXTON:** White people.

**LOGAN:** Aren't we aiming for an equitable world, not a fair world?

**JAXTON:** You've hit it right in the chakras. By doing this with the silenced voices, we are reinforcing the inequality of humans. Calling out one human as more worthy of attention and power.

**LOGAN:** But it is Native American Heritage Month. A particular time specified to lift up one people's voice over others.

**JAXTON:** But do we believe in that or have we played right into a massive blind spot? If you make a month for everyone, will it ever be fair? No. Someone will always be left out. Or get a weird month like Hispanic Heritage Month.

**ALICIA:** When's Hispanic Heritage Month?

**JAXTON:** September 15 to October 15.

**ALICIA:** How is that even a month?

**JAXTON:** Exactly.

**LOGAN:** Well it is 30 days.

**CADEN:** And it coincides with the Independence Days of several Latin American countries.

**JAXTON:** Come on, how is it equal to give one group a mid-month as their month?

**ALICIA:** There isn't a white-person month. I checked.

**JAXTON:** That's what I'm saying. Thank

you Alicia.

**LOGAN:** Basically every month is white-person month.

**JAXTON:** But once we are the minority again, will we get an official month? And will that make things right? No. The point is, this whole project is inherently inequitable. By raising up one voice through a month or silence, we are lowering another. That's not what we should be teaching children.

**LOGAN:** I think we're getting offtrack. My idea—

**JAXTON:** We have a worksheet for this. To add up privilege so that we can then equalize it.

**ALICIA:** What is privilege?

**LOGAN:** The things about you that give you power.

**ALICIA:** I'm hot. That's power so that's privilege.

**LOGAN:** Believing your power is only because of your looks is buying into a subjective social construct.

**ALICIA:** I haven't opened a door or paid for a drink since I was sixteen. Hotness is privilege.

**CADEN:** I think she's right.

**LOGAN:** Although I respect your hotness, this talk will get my Go! Girls! Scholastic Leadership funding pulled.

**JAXTON:** We can talk about your hotness at break Alicia. Now if we apply the worksheet to Logan's idea...

*He works it out on a board.*

**JAXTON:** The white people are visible so that's one point. The Native people have a month and silence so that's two points. The story is written pretty evenly so that's a point to both. See, the silence makes it unequal. *Alicia studies the math.*

**ALICIA:** So if one side is silent, to make it equal don't both sides have to be silent?

**JAXTON:** She might be right. It is the definition of simplicity.

**CADEN:** No it's not. It's the definition of madness. You can't have a silent play.

**JAXTON:** Actually, it's been done.

**CADEN:** How will they hear my script?

**JAXTON:** They were only going to hear the white half anyway. This would be closer to equal.

**CADEN:** What do we do, mime the story of the first Thanksgiving?

**ALICIA:** Mimes are so rude.

**JAXTON:** I think we just...feel the words.

**ALICIA:** I can do that.

**LOGAN:** Fine, let's give it a try.

**CADEN:** No.

**LOGAN:** Caden, it's a fluid process. It doesn't mean we are abandoning script completely.

**CADEN:** Yes it does. You've talked yourselves

into this equality thing. I have written 62 plays for grown-ups and this is the first one that has been read by actors over the age of nine. Do you have any idea how hard it is to labor over every line of historically correct language then only hear them read by people who can't read three-syllable words? It's excruciating. This is finally my chance to have my words read by people who can spell "theatre."

**ALICIA:** It's "R-E" right?

**CADEN:** That's a very interesting debate that I'll tell you about later. But right now I'm not letting you take away my chance to have my words read by grown-ups.

**JAXTON:** It's the right thing to do. Go Alicia. *Alicia jumps right into sexy Pilgrim poses.*

**CADEN:** I can't go back to third grade! I won't! *Jaxton joins Alicia in the silent scene.*

**CADEN:** Good Native king and good interpreter!

**JAXTON:** Respect the math Caden.

*The next section moves quickly, overlapping lines.*

**CADEN:** Welcome on this day of—

**JAXTON:** Shhh.

**CADEN:** The good Lord's feast of—

**JAXTON:** Shut it.

**CADEN:** Thanksgiving.

*Jaxton puts his hand over Caden's mouth to silence him.*

**LOGAN:** Respectful touch. Respectful touch.

**CADEN (Muffled):** What may I offer...

*Caden escapes Jaxton's hand and runs.*

**CADEN:** ...to make your visit pleasing?

*It becomes a comedic scuffle, two non-fighters. They move to the side of the room. Alicia joins their scuffle but while still being sexy and silent except to interject squeals or concern.*

**LOGAN:** Alicia, please stop that.

**JAXTON:** Don't push me Caden.

**CADEN:** I Samoset request the fowl your men gathered—

**LOGAN:** Think about the kids!

**CADEN:** with their exploding sticks! Massasoit, which part of the bird is most pleasing to your countenance? That which is most succulent pleaseth me.

**JAXTON:** You're ruining the simplicity!

**LOGAN:** We are the future!

**CADEN:** The breast is ample—

**JAXTON:** That's it.

*The men get serious in their scuffle.*

**CADEN:** Whilst the leg is moist!

**LOGAN:** Everyone just stop doing anything!!

*Everyone freezes in a weird physical moment.*

*Once they have settled, Logan notices the empty center of the room.*

**LOGAN:** We've done it.

**JAXTON:** This?





JOAN MARCUS

Jennifer Bareilles (Logan), Greg Keller (Jaxton) and Jeffrey Bean (Caden) in the Playwrights Horizons production, directed by Moritz von Stuelpnagel.

**LOGAN:** In the middle of the room. Look at it.  
*Everyone looks.*

**CADEN:** What?

**ALICIA:** I don't see it.

**LOGAN:** That is our play.

**CADEN:** I'm not following.

**LOGAN:** That space in the middle. That perfectly equitable emptiness.

**ALICIA:** I wanna see.

**CADEN:** The room is the play?

**LOGAN:** We've been trying too hard. The *empty space* is completely, finally equal. That is our Thanksgiving play.

**CADEN:** So the entire play is "nothingness"?

**ALICIA:** Oh, I see *that*.

**LOGAN:** Four white people can't do a play about Thanksgiving that doesn't piss off the funders or the parents or the universe. So we don't. Feel it for a moment.

*They do.*

**ALICIA:** I feel it!

**CADEN:** It is...something.

**JAXTON:** This nothing breaks the cycle of lies, stereotypes and inequality.

**CADEN:** The parents can't object to that.

**JAXTON:** It's brilliant Lo. You did it.

**LOGAN:** No, we did it. We all created this nothing together.

*They appreciate their accomplishment.*

**JAXTON:** So we're done!

**CADEN:** That's it?

**LOGAN:** One rehearsal. That's got to be a

record.

**JAXTON:** That's how us professionals roll.

**ALICIA:** But I think I have a contract to act in a play.

**LOGAN:** You and Jaxton will still be credited as actors and collaborators. Caden will have an added credit of dramaturg.

*Caden inhales sharply, instantly emotional.*

**CADEN:** Dramaturg? The holy grail of American theatre titles.

**ALICIA:** What is that?

**CADEN:** No one knows.

**ALICIA:** I still get paid for the rest of the rehearsals, right?

**LOGAN:** Of course.

**CADEN:** Can we come back tomorrow?

**LOGAN:** We don't have to. But the space is here for us if we want it.

**CADEN:** We could work on the sex comedy.

**ALICIA:** I'd like that.

*She throws sex bombs into the air.*

**LOGAN:** As the director I should technically be in the room.

**CADEN:** So, same time tomorrow? I'll bring pages.

**ALICIA:** I'll be late. Just...because.

**CADEN:** Because of the bus?

**ALICIA:** Oh right. That's why.

**CADEN:** I could give you a ride home. And pick you up. And give you a ride home again.

*Alicia considers him.*

**ALICIA:** OK. Can you also write a play for me?

I want to portray a better-known historical feminist woman like Carrie Bradshaw. Or Lara Croft. Or Shakira.

**CADEN:** Sure.

*Alicia and Caden go. Quick goodbyes all around.*

*Logan offers the recoupling gesture. Jaxton joins her.*

**LOGAN:** Are we OK?

**JAXTON:** Yeah. You've inspired me Lo, really.

**LOGAN:** Thank you. That means a lot.

**JAXTON:** This piece, the nothing. It's taught me that we need to do more of that.

**LOGAN:** How can the play be more than nothing?

**JAXTON:** Not the play. We need to be less. Do less. That's the lesson. By doing nothing, we become part of the solution. But it has to start here, with us.

**LOGAN:** Yes.

*They appreciate the nothing a moment more.*

*Lights out. The center of the room remains lit but empty.*

## END OF PLAY



Here's what's playing this month  
at TCG theatres nationwide.  
For the most up-to-date  
information about  
performance schedules,  
contact the theatre or  
visit Theatre Profiles online:  
[tcg.org/profiles](http://tcg.org/profiles).



## ALABAMA

**Alabama Shakespeare Festival**, Montgomery, (334) 271-5353, [asf.net](http://asf.net)  
**Four Little Girls: Birmingham 1963**, Christina Ham. Jan 25-Feb 13. Co-production with Alabama State University, AL  
**Nina Simone: Four Women**, Christina Ham; dir: Lydia Fort. Thru Feb 17.  
**Our Town**, Thornton Wilder; dir: Bruce Longworth. Feb 21-Apr 27.  
**Romeo and Juliet**, Shakespeare; dir: Rick Dildine. Feb 28-Apr 28.

## ALASKA

● **Cyrano's Theatre Company**, Anchorage, (907) 274-2599, [cyranos.org](http://cyranos.org)  
**Evil Dead, the Musical**, book, music, lyrics: George Reinblatt; music: Christopher Bond, Frank Cipolla, Melissa Morris; dir: Warren Weinstein. Thru Mar 3.

## ARIZONA

**Arizona Theatre Company**, Tucson, (520) 622-2823, [arizonatheatre.org](http://arizonatheatre.org)  
**Two Trains Running**, August Wilson; dir: Lou Bellamy. Thru Feb 9 (Tucson); thru Mar 3 (Phoenix).  
● **Childsplay**, Tempe, (602) 252-8497, [childsplayaz.org](http://childsplayaz.org)  
**And in this Corner: Cassius Clay**, Idris Goodwin. Thru Mar 3.  
● **Invisible Theatre Co**, Tucson, (520) 882-9721, [invisibletheatre.com](http://invisibletheatre.com)  
**Dancing Lessons**, Mark St. Germain; dir: Susan Classen. Feb 5-17.  
**White Rabbit Red Rabbit**, Nassim Soleimanpour Feb 21-23.  
**A Conversation With Edith Head**, Paddy Calistro, Susan Claassen. Feb 28-Mar 2.  
**iTheatre Collaborative**, Phoenix, (602) 252-8497, [itheatreaz.org](http://itheatreaz.org)  
**Hostage**, Michelle Kholos Brooks; dir: Christopher Haines. Thru Feb 3.  
**The Rogue Theatre**, Tucson, (520) 551-2053, [theroguetheatre.org](http://theroguetheatre.org)  
**The Secret in the Wings**, Mary Zimmerman; dir: Cynthia Meier. Feb 28-Mar 17.  
**Southwest Shakespeare Co**, Mesa, (480) 644-6500, [swshakespeare.org](http://swshakespeare.org)  
**Taming of the Shrew**, Shakespeare. Feb 22-Mar 9.  
**As You Like It**, Shakespeare; dir: Quinn Mattfeld. Feb 23-Mar 9.  
● **Valley Youth Theatre**, Phoenix, (602) 253-8188, [vyt.com](http://vyt.com)  
**The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane**, Feb 8-24.

## ARKANSAS

**TheatreSquared**, Fayetteville, (479) 443-5600, [theatre2.org](http://theatre2.org)  
**Every Brilliant Thing**, Jonny Donahoe, Duncan Macmillan. Thru Feb 10.  
**The Wolves**, Sarah Delappe. Feb 27-Mar 24.

## CALIFORNIA

● **24th Street Theatre Company**, Los Angeles, (213) 745-6516, [24thstreet.org](http://24thstreet.org)  
**The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane**, adapt: Dwayne Hartford; dir: Jane McEneaney. Feb 23-May 19.  
● **6th Street Playhouse**, Santa Rosa, [6thstreetplayhouse.com](http://6thstreetplayhouse.com)  
**Moon Over Buffalo**, Ken Ludwig; dir: Carl Jordan. Thru Feb 3.  
**A Streetcar Named Desire**, Tennessee Williams; dir: Phoebe Moyer. Thru Feb 17.  
**Million Dollar Quartet**, adapt: Colin Escott & Floyd Mutrux. Feb 22-Mar 17.  
**American Conservatory Theater**, San Francisco, (415) 749-2228, [act-sf.org](http://act-sf.org)  
**Seascape**, Edward Albee; dir: Pam MacKinnon. Thru Feb 17.  
**Her Portmanteau**, Mfoniso Odufia; dir: Victor Malana Maog. Feb 13-Apr 14.  
**Antaeus Theatre Company**, Glendale, (818) 506-1983, [antaeus.org](http://antaeus.org)  
**The Cripple of Inishmaan**, Martin McDonagh; dir: Steven Robman. Thru Mar 11.  
● **Aurora Theatre Company**, (510) 843-4822, [auroratheatre.org](http://auroratheatre.org)  
**Creditors**, August Strindberg; dir: Barbara Damashek. Thru Feb 24.  
● **Berkeley Repertory Theatre**, (510) 647-2949, [berkeleyrep.org](http://berkeleyrep.org)  
**Paradise Square**, Marcus Gardley, Larry Kirwan, Craig Lucas; lyrics: Nathan Tysen; dir: Moises Kaufman. Thru Feb 17.  
**Metamorphoses**, dir: Mary Zimmerman. Thru Mar 10. Co-production with Guthrie Theater, MN  
**CalArts Center for New Performance**, Valencia, (661) 253-7800, [centerfornewperformance.org](http://centerfornewperformance.org)  
**rasgos asiaticos**, Virginia Grise. Feb 4-26.  
**Capital Stage Company**, Sacramento, (916) 995-5464, [capstage.org](http://capstage.org)  
**Slowgirl**, Greg Pierce. Thru Feb 24.  
**Center Repertory Company**, Walnut Creek, (925) 943-7469, [centerrep.org](http://centerrep.org)  
**Communicating Doors**, Alan Ayckbourn; dir: Michael Butler. Thru Feb 23.  
● **Center Theatre Group**, Los Angeles, (213) 972-4400, [centertheatregroup.org](http://centertheatregroup.org)  
**Linda Vista**, Tracy Letts; dir: Dexter Bullard. Thru Feb 17.  
**Matthew Bourne's Cinderella**, dir: Matthew Bourne. Feb 5-Mar 10.  
**Central Works**, Berkeley, [centralworks.org](http://centralworks.org)  
**TBA**, Feb 14-Mar 17.  
**Chance Theater**, Anaheim, (888) 455-4212, [ChanceTheater.com](http://ChanceTheater.com)  
**Lizzie, The Musical**, book and lyrics: Tim Maner; music and lyrics: Steven Cheslik-DeMeyer; music: Alan Stevens Hewitt; dir: Jocelyn A. Brown. Feb 1-Mar 3.  
**Road Dahl's James and The Giant Peach**, book: Timothy Allen McDonald; music and lyrics: Benj Pasek, Justin Paul; dir: Darryl B. Hovis. Feb 15-Mar 3.  
● **City Lights Theater Company**, San Jose, [cltc.org](http://cltc.org)  
**Mothers and Sons**, Terrence McNally; dir: Jeffrey Bracco. Thru Feb 17.

**Coachella Valley Repertory**, Rancho Mirage, (760) 296-2966, [cvrep.org](http://cvrep.org)  
**White**, James Ijames; dir: Ron Celona. Thru Feb 17.  
**The Custom Made Theatre Company**, San Francisco, [custommade.org](http://custommade.org)  
**When We Were Young and Unafraid**, Sarah Treem; dir: Tracy Ward. Thru Feb 18.  
**Cygnnet Theatre Company**, San Diego, (619) 337-1525, [cygnnettheatre.com](http://cygnnettheatre.com)  
**Marie and Rosetta**, George Brant; dir: Rob Lutfy. Thru Feb 16.  
**Dell'Arte International**, Blue Lake, (707) 668-5663, [dellarte.com](http://dellarte.com)  
**Commedia!**, Feb 7-9.  
**Adaptation Projects**, Feb 21-24.  
● **Diversionsary Theatre**, San Diego, (619) 220-0097, [diversionary.org](http://diversionary.org)  
**The Hour of Great Mercy**, Miranda Rose Hall; dir: Rosina Reynolds. Thru Mar 3.  
**East West Players**, Los Angeles, (213) 625-7000, [eastwestplayers.org](http://eastwestplayers.org)  
**Man of God**, Anna Moench; dir: Jesca Prudencio. Thru Feb 24.  
**Ensemble Theatre Company**, Santa Barbara, (805) 965-5400, [etcsb.org](http://etcsb.org)  
**Death of a Salesman**, Arthur Miller; dir: Joseph Hanreddy. Feb 7-24.  
**Geffen Playhouse**, Los Angeles, (310) 208-5454, [geffenplayhouse.org](http://geffenplayhouse.org)  
**Lights Out: Nat "King" Cole**, Colman Domingo, Patricia McGregor (also dir). Feb 5-Mar 10.  
**International City Theatre**, Long Beach, (562) 436-4610, [ictlongbeach.org](http://ictlongbeach.org)  
**Life Could Be A Dream**, Roger Bean. Feb 20-Mar 10.  
● **La Jolla Playhouse**, (858) 550-1010, [lajollaplayhouse.org](http://lajollaplayhouse.org)  
**Diana**, book and lyrics: Joe DiPietro; music and lyrics: David Bryan; dir: Christopher Ashley. Feb 17-Mar 31.  
**Laguna Playhouse**, Laguna Beach, (949) 497-2787, [lagunaplayhouse.com](http://lagunaplayhouse.com)  
**1776**, book: Peter Stone; music and lyrics: Sherman Edwards; dir: Glenn Casale. Feb 20-Mar 17. Co-production with LaMirada Theatre, CA  
● **Marin Theatre Company**, Mill Valley, (415) 388-5208, [marintheatre.org](http://marintheatre.org)  
**How I Learned What I Learned**, August Wilson; dir: Margo Hall. Thru Feb 3.  
**The Who & The What**, Ayad Akhtar; dir: Hana S. Sharif. Feb 28-Mar 24.  
**Native Voices at the Autry**, Los Angeles, (323) 667-2000, <https://theautry.org/nativevoices>  
On tour: **Stories From the Indian Boarding School**, Native Voices Artists Ensemble; dir: Jean Bruce Scott. Thru Jun 30.  
● **The New Conservatory Theatre Center**, San Francisco, (415) 861-8972, [nctcsf.org](http://nctcsf.org)  
**Late Company**, Jordan Tannahill; dir: Evren Odcikin. Thru Feb 24.  
**New Village Arts Theatre**, Carlsbad, (760) 433-3245, [newvillagearts.org](http://newvillagearts.org)  
**Smokey Joe's Café: The Songs of Leiber and Stoller**, music and lyrics: Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller; dir: Tony Houck. Thru Mar 10.  
**A Noise Within**, Pasadena, (626) 356-3100, [anoisewithin.org](http://anoisewithin.org)  
**Othello**, Shakespeare; dir: Jessica Kubzansky. Feb 10-Apr 28.  
**The Glass Menagerie**, Tennessee Williams; dir: Geoff Elliott. Feb 24-Apr 26.

Discounted tickets are available to TCG Individual Members for performances at participating theatres, marked on these pages with an orange dot ●. Please check with each theatre for performance times, ticket discounts, and ticket availability. Present your TCG membership card to receive ticket discounts. Theatre participation is subject to change. For information on becoming an Individual Member, see [tcg.org/Membership/IndividualMembership.aspx](http://tcg.org/Membership/IndividualMembership.aspx).



● **North Coast Repertory Theatre**, Solana Beach, (858) 481-1055, [northcoastrep.org](http://northcoastrep.org)  
**Moon Over Buffalo**, Ken Ludwig; dir: Matthew Wiener. Thru Feb 3.  
**Gabriel**, Moira Buffini; dir: Christopher Williams. Feb 20-Mar 17.

● **Odyssey Theatre Ensemble**, Los Angeles, (310) 477-2055, [odysseytheatre.com](http://odysseytheatre.com)  
**HIR**, Taylor Mac; dir: Bart DeLorenzo. Thru Mar 17.

● **The Old Globe**, San Diego, (619) 234-5623, [theoldglobe.org](http://theoldglobe.org)  
**Familiar**, Danai Gurira. Thru Mar 3.  
**Tiny Beautiful Things**, book: Marshall Heyman, Thomas Kail, Nia Vardalos (also adapt); dir: James Vasquez. Feb 9-Mar 10.

**The Pasadena Playhouse**, (626) 356-7529, [pasadenaplayhouse.org](http://pasadenaplayhouse.org)  
**Ragtime**, Terrence McNally; lyrics: Lynn Ahrens; music: Stephen Flaherty; dir: David Lee. Feb 6-Mar 3.

**PCPA Pacific Conservatory Theatre**, Santa Maria, (805) 922-8313, [pcpa.org](http://pcpa.org)  
**Shakespeare in Love**, Tom Stoppard. Feb 7-24.

● **The Road Theatre Company**, North Hollywood, [roadtheatre.org](http://roadtheatre.org)  
**Death House**, Jason Karasev; dir: Michael Peretzian. Thru Mar 17.

**Sacred Fools Theater**, Los Angeles, [sacredfools.org](http://sacredfools.org)  
**Too Heavy for Your Pocket**, Jiréh Breon Holder; dir: Michael Shepherd. Thru Mar 2.

**San Diego Repertory Theatre**, (619) 544-1000, [sdrep.org](http://sdrep.org)  
**Aubergine**, Julia Cho; dir: Todd Salovey. Thru Feb 17.  
**Hershey Felder Beethoven**, Hershey Felder; music: Ludwig van Beethoven; dir: Joel Zwick. Feb 21-Mar 24.

● **South Coast Repertory**, Costa Mesa, (714) 708-5555, [scr.org](http://scr.org)  
**Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street**, book: Hugh Wheeler; music and lyrics: Stephen Sondheim; dir: Kent Nicholson. Thru Feb 16.  
**Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience**, book and lyrics: Mo Willems; music: Deborah Wicks La Puma; dir: Casey Stangl. Feb 1-17.

**TheatreWorks**, Palo Alto, (650) 463-1960, [theatreworks.org](http://theatreworks.org)  
**Frost/Nixon**, Peter Morgan; dir: Leslie Martinson. Thru Feb 10.

## COLORADO

**Arvada Center for the Arts & Humanities**, (720) 898-7200, [arvadacenter.org](http://arvadacenter.org)  
**The Diary of Anne Frank**, adapt: Wendy Kesselman from Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett; dir: Christy Montour-Larson. Feb 1-May 17.  
**The Moors**, Jen Silverman; dir: Anthony Powell. Feb 22-May 18.

**Boulder Ensemble Theatre Company**, (303) 444-SEAT, [betc.org](http://betc.org)  
**The Rembrandt**, Jessica Dickey; dir: Stephen Weitz. Feb 7-Mar 3.

**Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center at Colorado College Theatre Company**, (719) 634-5583, [coloradocollege.edu/fac](http://coloradocollege.edu/fac)  
**Anna in the Tropics**, Nilo Cruz. Feb 7-24.

● **Curious Theatre Company**, Denver, (303) 623-0524, [curioustheatre.org](http://curioustheatre.org)  
**Gloria**, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins; dir: Chip Walton. Thru Feb 16.

**Denver Center Theatre Co**, (303) 893-4100, [denvercenter.org](http://denvercenter.org)  
**Last Night and the Night Before**, Donnetta Lavinia Grays; dir: Valerie Curtis-Newton. Thru Feb 24.

**Anna Karenina**, adapt: Kevin McKeon; dir: Chris Coleman. Thru Feb 24.  
**The Whistleblower**, Itamar Moses. Feb 8-Mar 10.

● **OpenStage Theatre & Co**, Fort Collins, (970) 221-6730, [openstage.com](http://openstage.com)  
**Steel Magnolias**, Robert Harling; dir: Debbie Swann. Thru Feb 16.

**Phamaly Theatre Company**, Denver, [phamaly.org](http://phamaly.org)  
**Morph Masters: How Disability Made Famous Artists Awesome!**, Phamaly Theatre Company; dir: Charlie Oates. Thru Dec 31.

**THEATREWORKS**, Colorado Springs, (719) 255-3232, [theatreworkscs.org](http://theatreworkscs.org)  
**New Work**, Idris Goodwin; dir: Lisa Marie Rollins. Thru Feb 10.

## CONNECTICUT

**Connecticut Repertory Theatre**, Storrs, (860) 486-2113, [crt.uconn.edu](http://crt.uconn.edu)  
**The Mystery of Edwin Drood**, book, music, lyrics: Rupert Holmes; dir: Paul Mullins. Feb 28-Mar 10.

**Hartford Stage**, (860) 527-5151, [hartfordstage.org](http://hartfordstage.org)  
**The Engagement Party**, Samuel Baum; dir: Darko Tresnjak. Thru Feb 3.  
**Detroit '67**, Dominique Morisseau; dir: Jade King Carroll. Feb 14-Mar 10. Co-production with McCarter Theatre Center, NJ

**Long Wharf Theatre**, New Haven, (203) 787-4282, [longwharf.org](http://longwharf.org)  
**Miller, Mississippi**, Boo Killebrew; dir: Lee Sunday Evans. Thru Feb 3.  
**Tiny Beautiful Things**, adapt: Nia Vardalos from Marshall Heyman, Thomas Kail; dir: Ken Rus Schmoll. Feb 13-Mar 10.

**Yale Repertory Theatre**, New Haven, (203) 432-1234, [yalerep.org](http://yalerep.org)  
**Good Faith**, Karen Hartman; dir: Kenny Leon. Feb 1-23.

## DELAWARE

● **Delaware Theatre Company**, Wilmington, (302) 594-1100, [delawaretheatre.org](http://delawaretheatre.org)  
**Saint Joan**, adapt: Chelsea Marcantel from George Bernard Shaw; dir: Bud Martin. Feb 6-24.

**Resident Ensemble Players**, Newark, (302) 831-2204, [rep.udel.edu](http://rep.udel.edu)  
**Minor Fantastical Kingdoms**, Michael Gotch; dir: Mark Lamos. Thru Feb 10.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

**Arena Stage**, (202) 488-3300, [arenastage.org](http://arenastage.org)  
**Kleptocracy**, Kenneth Lin. Thru Feb 24.  
**The Heiress**, Augustus Goetz, Ruth Goetz; dir: Seema Sueko. Feb 8-Mar 10.

**Folger Theatre**, (202) 544-7077, [folger.edu/theatre](http://folger.edu/theatre)  
**Nell Gwynn**, Jessica Swale; dir: Robert Richmond. Thru Mar 10.

**GALA Hispanic Theatre**, (202) 234-7174, [galatheatre.org](http://galatheatre.org)  
**El viejo, el joven y el mar (The Old Man, the Youth, and the Sea)**, Irma Correa; dir: José Luis Arellano. Feb 7-Mar 3.

**Mosaic Theater Company of DC**, [mosaictheater.org](http://mosaictheater.org)  
**Shame (with comments from the populace)**, adapt: Ari Roth from Mourad Hassan, Einat Weizman; dir: John Vreeke. Thru Feb 17.

**The Shakespeare Theatre Company**, (202) 547-1122, [shakespearetheatre.org](http://shakespearetheatre.org)  
**Richard the Third**, Shakespeare; dir: David Muse. Feb 5-Mar 10.  
**Vanity Fair**, Kate Hamill; dir: Jessica Stone. Feb 26-Mar 31.

**Studio Theatre**, (202) 332-3300, [studiotheatre.org](http://studiotheatre.org)  
**Admissions**, Joshua Harmon; dir: Mike Donahue. Thru Feb 17.

**Woolly Mammoth Theatre Co**, (202) 393-3939, [woollymammoth.net](http://woollymammoth.net)  
**BLKS**, Aziza Barnes; dir: Nataki Garrett. Feb 4-Mar 3.

## FLORIDA

**American Stage Theatre Company**, St Petersburg, (727) 823-7529, [americanstage.org](http://americanstage.org)  
**Pipeline**, Dominique Morisseau; dir: L. Peter Callender. Thru Feb 24.

● **Asolo Repertory Theatre**, Sarasota, (941) 351-8000, [asolo.org](http://asolo.org)  
**The Crucible**, Arthur Miller; dir: Michael Donald Edwards. Thru Mar 10.  
**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Peter Amster. Thru Mar 31.  
**Sweat**, Lynn Nottage; dir: Nicole A. Watson. Feb 6-Apr 13.

● **Emerald Coast Theatre Company**, Miramar Beach, (850) 684-0232  
**TYA: The Snowy Day and Other Stories**, adapt: Jerome Hairston from Ezra Jack Keats; dir: Anna Fisher. Feb 15-23.



Patrick Noonan and Jennifer Cody in the world premiere production of *Hard Cell* at Geva Theatre Center in Rochester, N.Y.



● **Florida Repertory Theatre**, Fort Myers, (239) 332-4488, [floridarep.org](http://floridarep.org)  
**Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical**, Mark Mark Friedman, Janet Vogt; dir: Eleanor Holdridge. Thru Feb 24.  
**Hay Fever**, Noël Coward; dir: Mark Shanahan. Feb 12-Mar 6.

● **Florida Studio Theatre**, Sarasota, (941) 366-9000, [floridastudiotheatre.org](http://floridastudiotheatre.org)  
**Unchained Melodies**, Rebecca Hopkins, Richard Hopkins; book: Jim Prosser; dir: Catherine Randazzo. Thru Feb 3.  
**Guitar Girls**, Rebecca Hopkins, Richard Hopkins, Catherine Randazzo (also dir); book: Jim Prosser. Thru Mar 31.  
**Straight White Men**, Young Jean Lee; dir: Kate Alexander. Thru Mar 1.  
**Snow White**, adapt: Greg Banks; dir: Jason Cannon. Thru Feb 16.  
**Hand to God**, Robert Askins; dir: Jason Cannon. Thru Feb 8.  
**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time**, adapt: Simon Stephens; dir: Richard Hopkins. Thru Mar 17.  
**The Wonder Years - The Music of the Baby Boomers**, Rebecca Hopkins, Richard Hopkins; book: Jim Prosser; dir: Catherine Randazzo. Feb 6-Jun 9.  
**Cherry Docs**, David Gow; dir: Kate Alexander. Feb 20-Mar 15.

● **GableStage**, Coral Gables, (305) 445-1119, [gablestage.org](http://gablestage.org)  
**Indecent**, Paula Vogel. Thru Feb 24.

**Gulfshore Playhouse**, Naples, (866) 811-4111, [gulfshoreplayhouse.org](http://gulfshoreplayhouse.org)  
**The Revolutionists**, Lauren Gunderson; dir: Kristen Coury. Thru Feb 3.  
**In the Next Room or the Vibrator Play**, Sarah Ruhl; dir: Jeffrey Binder. Feb 16-Mar 10.

**Jobsite Theater**, Tampa, (813) 229-7827, [jobsitetheater.org](http://jobsitetheater.org)  
**Othello**, adapt: David Jenkins (also dir) from Shakespeare. Thru Feb 3.

**Maltz Jupiter Theatre**, Jupiter, (561) 575-2223, [jupitertheatre.org](http://jupitertheatre.org)  
**Mamma Mia!**, book: Catherine Johnson; music and lyrics: Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus; dir: Elise Kinnon (assoc), Mark Martino. Thru Feb 10.  
**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: J. Barry Lewis. Feb 24-Mar 10.

**Miami New Drama | Colony Theatre**, Miami Beach, **FAKE**, Carmen Pelaez. Thru Feb 17.

**Palm Beach Dramaworks**, West Palm Beach, (561) 514-4042, [palmbeachdramaworks.org](http://palmbeachdramaworks.org)  
**The Spitfire Grill**, book: James Valcq; lyrics: Fred Alley; dir: Paul Stancato. Thru Feb 24.  
**Dramalogue - Talking Theatre**, Feb 5.

**Red Barn Theatre**, Key West, (305) 296-9911, [redbarntheatre.com](http://redbarntheatre.com)  
**Short Attention Span Theatre 2019**, dir: Gary McDonald, Jack McDonald, Mimi McDonald. Thru Feb 9.  
**Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical**, Mark Friedman, Janet Yates. Feb 19-Mar 16.

**Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe**, Sarasota, (941) 366-1505, [westcoastblacktheatre.org](http://westcoastblacktheatre.org)  
**The Amen Corner**, James Baldwin; dir: Chuck Smith. Thru Mar 23.

## GEORGIA

**7 Stages**, Atlanta, (404) 523-7647, [7stages.org](http://7stages.org)  
**Warped**, Feb 21-24.

● **Actor's Express**, Atlanta, (404) 607-7469, [actors-express.com](http://actors-express.com)  
**An Octoroon**, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins; dir: Donya K. Washington. Thru Feb 24.

**Alliance Theatre**, Atlanta, (404) 733-5000, [alliancetheatre.org](http://alliancetheatre.org)  
**La Tortuga and the Hare**, Rosemary Newcott, Lauri Stallings (also dirs). Thru Feb 17.

**Ever After**, book and lyrics: Marcy Heisler; music: Zina Goldrich; dir: Susan V. Booth. Thru Feb 17.  
**Goonight, Tyler**, B.J. Tindal; dir: Kent Gash. Feb 16-Mar 10.

**Aurora Theatre**, Lawrenceville, (678) 226-6222, [auroratheatre.com](http://auroratheatre.com)  
**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Freddie Ashley. Thru Feb 10. Co-production with Actor's Express, GA  
**Beat Bugs: A Musical Adventure**, David Abbinanti, Sean Cercone; dir: Justin Anderson. Thru Feb 9.

**Rabbit Summer**, Tracey Conyer Lee; dir: Cynthia D. Barker. Feb 8-Mar 3.

**Georgia Ensemble Theatre**, Roswell, (770) 641-1260, [get.org](http://get.org)  
**Driving Miss Daisy**, Alfred Uhry. Feb 28-Mar 17.

**Out of Hand Theater**, Atlanta, (404) 462-8836, [outofhandtheater.com](http://outofhandtheater.com)  
**The Helene Mills Seniors Story**, Adam Fristoe, Ariel Fristoe. Feb 1-Apr 1.

● **Synchronicity Theatre**, Atlanta, (404) 484-8636, [synchrotheatre.com](http://synchrotheatre.com)  
**Bob Marley's Three Little Birds**, adapt: Michael J. Bobbitt from Cedella Marley; book and lyrics: Bob Marley. Thru Feb 24.

● **Theatrical Outfit**, Atlanta, (678) 528-1500, [theatricaloutfit.org](http://theatricaloutfit.org)  
**The Pitman Painters**, Lee Hall; dir: Adam Koplan. Feb 27-Mar 24.

**Kenny Leon's True Colors Theatre Company**, Atlanta, (877) 725-8849, [truecolorstheatre.org](http://truecolorstheatre.org)  
**Skeleton Crew**, Dominique Morisseau; dir: Jamil Jude. Feb 12-Mar 10.

## HAWAII

**Honolulu Theatre for Youth**, (808) 839-9885, [htyweb.org](http://htyweb.org)  
**Home of the Brave**, Lee Cataluna. Feb 8-23.

**Kumu Kahua Theatre**, Honolulu, (808) 536-4441, [kumukahua.org](http://kumukahua.org)  
**Shipwreck'd on the Body Beautiful, or the Tats Dancing Man**, Daniel A. Kelin, II; dir: Harry Wong. Thru Feb 17.

## IDAHO

**Boise Contemporary Theater**, (208) 331-9224, [bctheater.org](http://bctheater.org)  
**Lewiston**, Samuel D. Hunter; dir: Davis McCallum. Feb 6-Mar 9. Co-production with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, NY  
**Clarkston**, Samuel D. Hunter; dir: Davis McCallum. Feb 13-Mar 9. Co-production with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, NY

**Company of Fools**, Sun Valley, (208) 578-9122, [companyoffools.org](http://companyoffools.org)  
**4000 Miles**, Amy Herzog; dir: Gary Hopper. Feb 13-Mar 2.

## ILLINOIS

**16th Street Theater**, Berwyn, (708) 795-6704, [16thstreettheater.org](http://16thstreettheater.org)  
**Small Jokes About Monsters**, Steven Strafford; dir: Kristina Valada-Viars. Thru Feb 16.  
**The South Side**, adapt: Ann Filmer from Natalie Y. Moore. Feb 25.

● **About Face Theatre**, Chicago, [aboutfacetheatre.com](http://aboutfacetheatre.com)  
**Dada Woof Papa Hot**, Peter Parnell; dir: Keira Fromm. Thru Feb 16.

**Adventure Stage Chicago**, (773) 342-4141, [adventurestage.org](http://adventurestage.org)  
**The Stranger and The Shadow (A Working Title)**, Thru Feb 16.

**American Blues Theater**, Chicago, (773) 327-5252, [americanbluestheater.com](http://americanbluestheater.com)  
**The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey**, James Lecesne; dir: Kurt Johns. Mar 29-Apr 27.  
**On Clover Road**, Steven Dietz; dir: Halena Kays. Feb 1-Mar 16.

**Chicago Shakespeare Theater**, (312) 595-5600, [chicagoshakes.com](http://chicagoshakes.com)  
**Us/Them**, Carly Wijs (also dir). Thru Feb 3.  
**Short Shakespeare! Macbeth**, adapt: Marti Lyons from Shakespeare. Feb 16-Mar 16.  
**An Inspector Calls**, JB Priestley; dir: Stephen Daldry. Feb 19-Mar 10.

● **Court Theatre**, Chicago, (773) 753-4472, [courttheatre.org](http://courttheatre.org)  
**Photograph 51**, Anna Ziegler; dir: Vanessa Stalling. Thru Feb 17.

**First Folio Theatre**, Oak Brook, (630) 986-8067, [firstfolio.org](http://firstfolio.org)  
**All Childish Things**, Joseph Zettelmaier; dir: Melanie Keller. Thru Feb 24.

**Goodman Theatre**, Chicago, (312) 443-3800, [goodmantheatre.org](http://goodmantheatre.org)  
**How to Catch Creation**, Christina Anderson; dir: Nigel Smith. Thru Feb 24.  
**Twilight Bowl**, Rebecca Gilman; dir: Erica Weiss. Feb 8-Mar 10.

● **The House Theatre of Chicago**, (773) 769-3832, [thehousetheatre.com](http://thehousetheatre.com)  
**The Magic Parlour**, Dennis Watkins. Thru Jul 28.

● **Jackalope Theatre Company**, Chicago, [jackalopetheatre.org](http://jackalopetheatre.org)  
**Dutch Masters**, Greg Keller; dir: Wardell Julius Clark. Feb 25-Apr 6.

**Lookingglass Theatre Co**, Chicago, (312) 337-0665, [lookingglasstheatre.org](http://lookingglasstheatre.org)  
**Act(s) of God**, Kareem Bandealy; dir: Heidi Stillman. Feb 13-Apr 7.

**Northlight Theatre**, Skokie, (847) 673-6300, [northlight.org](http://northlight.org)  
**Nina Simonoe: Four Women**, Christina Ham; dir: Kenneth L. Roberson. Thru Mar 2.

● **Raven Theatre Company**, Chicago, (773) 338-2177, [raventheatre.com](http://raventheatre.com)  
**How I Learned to Drive**, Paula Vogel; dir: Cody Estle. Feb 7-Mar 24.

**A Red Orchid Theatre**, Chicago, [aredorchidtheatre.org](http://aredorchidtheatre.org)  
**Fulfillment Center**, Abe Kugler; dir: Jess McLeod. Thru Mar 24.

**Steppenwolf Theatre Co**, Chicago, (312) 335-1650, [steppenwolf.org](http://steppenwolf.org)  
**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Robin Witt. Thru Mar 17.

● **TimeLine Theatre Company**, Chicago, (773) 281-8463, [timelinetheatre.com](http://timelinetheatre.com)  
**Cardboard Piano**, Hansol Jung; dir: Mechelle Moe. Thru Mar 17.

● **Victory Gardens Theater**, Chicago, (773) 871-3000, [VictoryGardens.org](http://VictoryGardens.org)  
**Pipeline**, Dominique Morisseau; dir: Cheryl Lynn Bruce. Feb 1-Mar 3.

● **Writers Theatre**, Glencoe, (847) 242-6000, [writerstheatre.org](http://writerstheatre.org)  
**Ma Rainey's Black Bottom**, August Wilson; dir: Ron OJ Parson. Feb 6-Mar 17.

## INDIANA

● **Cardinal Stage Company**, Bloomington, (812) 336-9300, [cardinalstage.org](http://cardinalstage.org)  
**Rounding Third**, Richard Dresser. Thru Feb 10.

● **Indiana Repertory Theatre**, Indianapolis, (317) 635-5252, [irtlive.com](http://irtlive.com)  
**Every Brilliant Thing**, Johnny Donahoe, Duncan Macmillan; dir: Tim Ocel. Thru Feb 10.  
**The Diary of Anne Frank**, adapt: Wendy Kesselman from Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett; dir: Janet Allen. Thru Feb 24. Co-production with Seattle Children's Theatre, OR

## KENTUCKY

● **Actors Theatre of Louisville**, (502) 584-1205, [actorstheatre.org](http://actorstheatre.org)  
**Pipeline**, Dominique Morisseau; dir: Steve H. Broadnax III. Thru Feb 2.



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**Hershey Felder as Irving Berlin**, book: Hershey Felder; music and lyrics: Irving Berlin; dir: Trevor Hay. Thru Feb 17.

● **Lexington Children's Theatre**, (859) 254-4546, [lctonstage.org](http://lctonstage.org)  
**And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank**, James Still; dir: Vivian Snipes. Feb 16-17.

**Commonwealth Theatre Center**, Louisville, (502) 589-0084, [commonwealththeatre.org](http://commonwealththeatre.org)  
**Young Playwrights Festival 2019**, Student Playwrights. Feb 6-17.  
**The Trials of Robin Hood**, Will Averill; dir: Meg Caudill. Feb 6-17.

## LOUISIANA

**Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré**, New Orleans, [lepetittheatre.com](http://lepetittheatre.com)  
**A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder**, book and lyrics: Robert L. Freedman; music and lyrics: Steven Lutvak; dir: Christina Pellegrini. Thru Feb 3.

**The NOLA Project**, New Orleans, (504) 302-9117, [nolaproject.com](http://nolaproject.com)  
**Stockholm Syndrome**, Adam Szymkowicz; music: Jack Craft, Skyler Stroup; dir: A.J. Allegra. Thru Feb 9.

● **Southern Rep Theatre**, New Orleans, (504) 522-6545, [southernrep.com](http://southernrep.com)  
**The Wolves**, Sarah DeLappe; dir: Aimee Hayes. Thru Feb 3.

## MAINE

**Penobscot Theatre**, Bangor, (207) 942-3333, [penobscottheatre.org](http://penobscottheatre.org)  
**Honky Tonk Laundry**, Roger Bean, Jon Newton; dir: Dominick Varney. Thru Feb 24.

**Portland Stage Company**, (207) 774-0465, [portlandstage.org](http://portlandstage.org)  
**The Importance of Being Earnest**, Oscar Wilde. Thru Feb 17.  
**The Half-Light**, Monica Wood. Feb 26-Mar 24.

**The Public Theatre**, Lewiston, (207) 782-3200, [thepublictheatre.org](http://thepublictheatre.org)  
**Human Error**, Eric Pfeffinger; dir: Christopher Schario. Thru Feb 3.

## MARYLAND

**Center Stage**, Baltimore, (410) 332-0033, [centerstage.org](http://centerstage.org)  
**Fun Home**, book and lyrics: Lisa Kron; music: Jeanine Tesori; dir: Hana S. Sharif. Thru Feb 24.  
**Indecent**, Paula Vogel; dir: Eric Rosen. Feb 28-Mar 31. Co-production with Arena Stage, D.C. and Kansas City Repertory Theatre, KA

**Everyman Theatre**, Baltimore, (410) 752-2208, [everymantheatre.org](http://everymantheatre.org)  
**Everything is Wonderful**, Chelsea Marcantel; dir: Noah Himmelstein. Thru Mar 3.

**Imagination Stage**, Bethesda, (301) 280-1660, [imaginationstage.org](http://imaginationstage.org)  
**Anatole: Mouse Magnifique**, book: Lee Becker, John MacLay; music: James Valcq; dir: Tom Story. Feb 9-Mar 24.

**Dickens's Davy Copperfield**, Janet Stanford (also dir); music: Tim Guillot. Feb 16-Mar 31.

**Maryland Ensemble Theatre**, Frederick, (301) 694-4744, [marylandensemble.org](http://marylandensemble.org)  
**Radium Girls**, D.W. Gregory; dir: Gerard Stropnick. Feb 14-Mar 9.

● **Olney Theatre Center for the Arts**, Olney, (301) 924-3400, [olneytheatre.org](http://olneytheatre.org)  
**Once**, book: Enda Walsh; music and lyrics: Glen Hansard, Markéta Irglová; dir: Marcia Milgrom Dodge. Feb 6-Mar 10.

**Oil**, Ella Hickson; dir: Tracy Brigden. Feb 27-Mar 31.

**Rep Stage**, Columbia, (443) 518-1500, [repstage.org](http://repstage.org)  
**Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992**, Anna Deavere Smith; dir: Paige Hernandez. Feb 28-Mar 17.

## MASSACHUSETTS

**American Repertory Theater**, Cambridge, (617) 547-8300, [americanrepertorytheater.org](http://americanrepertorytheater.org)  
**Othello**, Shakespeare; dir: Bill Rauch. Thru Feb 9.  
**Endlings**, Celine Song; dir: Sammi Cannold. Feb 26-Mar 17.

**ArtsEmerson**, Boston, (617) 824-8000, [artsemerson.org](http://artsemerson.org)  
**To The Source**, Ewa Kaim; dir: Ewa Kaim. Thru Feb 3.  
**When Angels Fall**, music: Arthur Bison; dir: Raphaël Boitel. Feb 20-24.

**Huntington Theatre Company**, Boston, (617) 266-0800, [huntingtontheatre.org](http://huntingtontheatre.org)  
**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Les Waters. Thru Feb 3.

● **Merrimack Repertory Theatre**, Lowell, (978) 654-4678, [mrt.org](http://mrt.org)  
**Slow Food**, Wendy MacLeod; dir: Sean Daniels. Thru Feb 3.  
**The Heath**, Lauren Gunderson; dir: Sean Daniels. Feb 13-Mar 10.

● **New Repertory Theatre**, Watertown, (617) 923-8487, [newrep.org](http://newrep.org)  
**Heartland**, Gabriel Jason Dean; dir: Bridget Kathleen O'Leary. Thru Feb 9.  
**Still Standing**, Anita Hollander. Feb 9-Mar 3.

**SpeakEasy Stage Company**, Boston, (617) 933-8600, [speakeasystage.com](http://speakeasystage.com)  
**Small Mouth Sounds**, Bess Wohl; dir: M. Bevin O'Gara. Thru Feb 2.

## MICHIGAN

● **Detroit Repertory Theatre**, (313) 868-1347, [detroitreptheatre.com](http://detroitreptheatre.com)  
**The House on Poe Street**, Fengar Gael; dir: Leah Smith. Thru Mar 17.

● **Flint Repertory Theatre**, Flint, (810) 237-7333, [flintrep.org](http://flintrep.org)  
**The Wolves**, Sarah DeLappe; dir: Kathryn Walsh. Feb 8-17.

**Meadow Brook Theatre**, Rochester, (248) 377-3300, [mbtheatre.com](http://mbtheatre.com)  
**Ken Ludwig's A Fox on the Fairway**, Ken Ludwig; dir: Travis Walter. Thru Feb 3.  
**The Spitfire Grill**, James Valcq; lyrics: Fred Alley; dir: Travis Walter. Feb 13-Mar 10.

**Williamston Theatre**, Williamston, (517) 655-7469, [williamstontheatre.org](http://williamstontheatre.org)  
**To Quiet The Quiet**, Christy Hall; dir: Shannon Wojtas. Thru Feb 24.

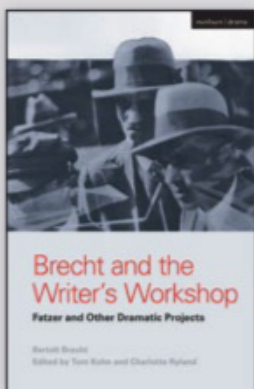
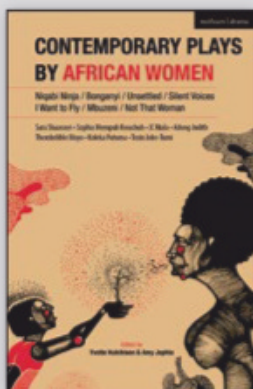
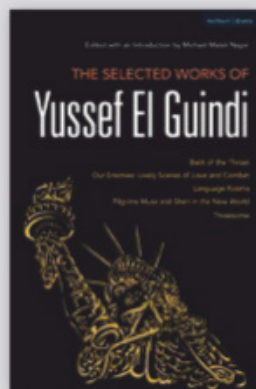
## MINNESOTA

**Children's Theatre Company**, Minneapolis, (612) 874-0400, [childrenstheatre.org](http://childrenstheatre.org)  
**Mr. Popper's Penguins**, adapt: Pins and Needles Productions; lyrics: Richy Hughes; music: Luke Bateman; dir: Emma Earle. Thru Feb 24.  
**The Biggest Little House in the Forest**, adapt: Rosanna Staffa; music: Victor Zupanc; dir: Peter C. Brosius. Thru Mar 10.

● **DalekoArts**, New Prague, (952) 314-9072, [dalekoarts.com](http://dalekoarts.com)  
**Constellations**, Nick Payne; dir: Amy Rummenie. Feb 22-Mar 10.

**Guthrie Theater**, Minneapolis, (612) 377-2224, [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org)  
**The Great Leap**, Lauren Yee. Thru Feb 10.  
**As You Like It**, Shakespeare. Feb 9-Mar 17.

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**History Theatre**, St Paul, (651) 292-4323, [historytheatre.com](http://historytheatre.com)  
**Stewardess!**, Kira Obolensky; dir: Noel Raymond. Feb 9-Mar 3.

**Jungle Theater**, Minneapolis, (612) 822-7063, [jungletheater.com](http://jungletheater.com)  
**The Children**, Lucy Kirkwood; dir: Casey Stangl. Thru Feb 10.

**Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company**, St Paul, (651) 647-4315, [mnjewishtheatre.org](http://mnjewishtheatre.org)  
**Actually**, Anna Ziegler. Feb 16-Mar 10.

**Park Square Theatre**, St Paul, (651) 291-7005, [parksquaretheatre.org](http://parksquaretheatre.org)  
**Antigone**, adapt: Meagan Kedrowski (also dir). Feb 1-Mar 3.  
**The Skin of Our Teeth**, Thornton Wilder; dir: Joel Sass. Feb 7-Mar 3.

**Penumbra Theatre Company**, St Paul, (651) 224-3180, [penumbratheatre.org](http://penumbratheatre.org)  
**Sunday Supper: Mule Bone - A Comedy of Negro Life**, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston. Feb 10.  
**benevolence**, Ifa Bayeza; dir: Talvin Wilks. Feb 12-Mar 10.  
**Race Workshop - Public**, Feb 23.  
**Sunday Supper: Family Portraits - Stories from Our Community**, Feb 24.

**Theater Latté Da**, Minneapolis, [latteda.org](http://latteda.org)  
**A Little Night Music**, Hugh Wheeler; music and lyrics: Stephen Sondheim; dir: Peter Rothstein. Thru Mar 3.

## MISSISSIPPI

● **New Stage Theatre**, Jackson, (601) 948-3531, [newstagetheatre.com](http://newstagetheatre.com)  
**Hell in High Water (Also Known as "On the Levee"**, Marcus Gardley. Thru Feb 10.

## MISSOURI

**The Coterie Theatre**, Kansas City, (816) 474-6552, [thecoterie.org](http://thecoterie.org)  
**Secret Soldiers: Heroines In Disguise**, Wendy Lement. Thru Feb 10.  
**Mr. Popper's Penguins**, adapt: Robert Kauzlaric; music and lyrics: George Howe. Feb 26-Mar 31.

**Kansas City Repertory Theatre**, (816) 235-2700, [kcrep.org](http://kcrep.org)  
**Indecent**, Paula Vogel; dir: Eric Rosen. Thru Feb 10. Co-production with Arena Stage, D.C. and Baltimore Center Stage, MD

**School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play**, Joycelyn Bioh; dir: Chip Miller. Feb 22-Mar 24.

**Metro Theater Company**, St Louis, [metroplays.org](http://metroplays.org)  
**The Hundred Dresses**, adapt: William Kent Williams; dir: Julia Flood. Feb 1-26.

**Metropolitan Ensemble Theare**, Kansas City, (816) 569-3226, [metkc.org](http://metkc.org)  
**Seven Guitars**, August Wilson; dir: Karen Paisley. Feb 21-Mar 10.

● **New Line Theatre**, St Louis, (314) 534-1111, [NewLineTheatre.com](http://NewLineTheatre.com)  
**La Cage aux Folles**, book: Fierstein Harvey; music and lyrics: Jerry Herman; dir: Mike Dowdy-Windsor, Scott Miller. Feb 28-Mar 23.

**Mesner Puppet Theater**, Kansas City, (816) 235-6222, [mesnerpuppets.org](http://mesnerpuppets.org)  
**Anansi the Spider**, adapt: Mike Horner, Paul Mesner. Feb 13-Mar 3.

● **The Repertory Theatre of St Louis**, (314) 968-4925, [repstl.org](http://repstl.org)  
**The Tortoise and the Hare**, book: Sarah Brandt; music and lyrics: Neal Richardson; dir: Laurie McConnell. Thru Apr 6.  
**Greek Myths: Heroes and Monsters**, Michael Erickson; dir: Gad Guterman. Thru Apr 7.  
**The Wolves**, Sarah Delappe; dir: Melissa Rain Anderson. Thru Feb 3.  
**Oslo**, J.T. Rogers; dir: Steven Woolf. Feb 6-Mar 3.

**St Louis Black Repertory Co**, University City, (314) 534-3810, [theblackrep.org](http://theblackrep.org)  
**Marie and Rosetta**, George Brant; dir: Ron Himes. Feb 13-Mar 3.

● **Unicorn Theatre**, Kansas City, (816) 531-7529, [unicorntheatre.org](http://unicorntheatre.org)  
**Nomad Motel**, Carla Ching; dir: Ian R. Crawford, Andi Meyer. Thru Feb 17.

**Upstream Theater**, St Louis, (314) 863-4999, [upstreamtheater.org](http://upstreamtheater.org)  
**TBA**, Thru Feb 10.

## NEBRASKA

**The BLUEBARN Theatre**, Omaha, (402) 345-1576, [bluebarn.org](http://bluebarn.org)  
**I and You**, Lauren Gunderson. Thru Feb 24.

● **Nebraska Repertory Theatre**, Lincoln, (402) 472-4747, [nebraskarep.org](http://nebraskarep.org)  
**Dutchman**, Amiri Baraka, LeRoi Jones; dir: Ron Himes. Feb 13-24.

**Omaha Theater Company**, , (402) 345-4849, [rosetheater.org](http://rosetheater.org)  
**Return to Niobrara**, Mary Kathryn Nagle. Thru Feb 10.  
**Thumbelina**, adapt: Stephanie Jacobson. Feb 8-Mar 3.  
**The Doll Maker's Gift**, adapt: EllaRose Chary, Fran Sillau; lyrics: Sammy Buck; music: Brian Feinstein. Feb 22-Mar 10.

## NEVADA

**Bruka Theatre**, Reno, (775) 323-3221, [bruka.org](http://bruka.org)  
**The Dresser**, Ronald Harwood; dir: David Richards. Thru Feb 1.  
**Galileo - Theatre For Children**, Mary Bennett (also dir). Feb 21-23.

## NEW JERSEY

**Centenary Stage Company**, Hackettstown, (908) 979-0900, [centenarystageco.org](http://centenarystageco.org)  
**An Enemy of the People**, adapt: John Alan Wyatt from Henrik Ibsen. Feb 18-Mar 3.

● **McCarter Theatre Center**, Princeton, (609) 258-2787, [mccarter.org](http://mccarter.org)  
**The Niceties**, Eleanor Burgess; dir: Kimberly Senior. Thru Feb 10.

**New Jersey Repertory Company**, Long Branch, (732) 229-3166, [njrep.org](http://njrep.org)  
**Apple Season**, E.M. Lewis; dir: Zoya Kachadurian. Thru Feb 10.

**Two River Theater**, Red Bank, (732) 345-1400, [tworivertheater.org](http://tworivertheater.org)  
**Noises Off**, Michael Frayn; dir: Sarna Lapine. Thru Feb 3.  
**Theo**, Martin Moran; dir: Carolyn Cantor. Feb 23-Mar 24.

## NEW YORK

**Atlantic Theater Company**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [atlantictheater.org](http://atlantictheater.org)  
**Eddie and Dave**, Amy Staats; dir: Margot Bordelon. Thru Feb 10.  
**The Mother**, Florian Zeller; dir: Trip Cullman. Feb 20-Apr 7.

**The Barrow Group**, NYC, (212) 760-2615, [barrowgroup.org](http://barrowgroup.org)  
**Awake**, K. Lorrel Manning (also dir). Thru Feb 8.

● **Geva Theatre Center**, Rochester, (585) 232-4382, [gevatheatre.org](http://gevatheatre.org)  
**Hard Cell**, Brent Askari; dir: Skip Greer. Thru Feb 3.  
**The Magician's Daughter**, Lila Rose Kaplan; dir: Shelley Butler. Thru Feb 10.  
**The Humans**, Stephen Karam; dir: Mark Cuddy. Feb 19-Mar 17. Co-production with Syracuse Stage, NY

**The Harold Clurman Laboratory Theater Company**, NYC, (212) 689-0087, [stellaaadler.com/cultural-center/harold-clurman-laboratory-theater-company/](http://stellaaadler.com/cultural-center/harold-clurman-laboratory-theater-company/)  
**The Seagull**, Chekov; dir: Tom Oppenheim. Thru Feb 9.

**Irish Classical Theatre Co**, Buffalo, (716) 853-4282, [irishclassicaltheatre.com](http://irishclassicaltheatre.com)  
**Sense & Sensibility**, adapt: Kate Hamill from Jane Austen; dir: Chris Kelly. Thru Feb 10.

**Irondale Ensemble Project**, Brooklyn, (718) 488-9233, [irondale.org](http://irondale.org)  
**To Protect, Serve and Understand**, dir: Michael-David Gordon, Terry Greiss, Sam Metzger, Rivka Rivera. Thru Jun 1.  
**The Infinite Hotel**, Matthew McGuigan. Thru Feb 3. Co-production with HERE, NY  
**She Stands Alone: Solo Performances by Women**, Thru Mar 2.

**Kitchen Theatre Company**, Ithaca, (607) 272-0403, [kitchentheatre.org](http://kitchentheatre.org)  
**The Roommate**, Jen Silverman; dir: Caitlin Lowans. Thru Feb 17.



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**Mabou Mines**, NYC, [maboumines.org](http://maboumines.org)  
**Imagining The Imaginary Invalid**, adapt: Clove Galilee, Valeria Vasilevski. Thru Feb 7.  
 Co-production with La Mama ETC, NY  
**SUITE/Space 2019**, Thru Feb 3.

**Manhattan Theatre Club**, NYC, (212) 239-6200, [ManhattanTheatreClub.com](http://ManhattanTheatreClub.com)  
**Choir Boy**, Tarell Alvin McCraney; dir: Trip Cullman. Thru Mar 3.  
**The Cake**, Bekah Brunstetter; dir: Lynne Meadow. Thru Mar 31.

● **Metropolitan Playhouse**, NYC, (212) 995-8410, [metropolitanplayhouse.org](http://metropolitanplayhouse.org)  
**State of the Union**, Russel Crouse, Harold Lindsay; dir: Laura Livingston. Thru Mar 10.

**MusicalFare Theatre**, Amherst, (716) 839-8540, [musicalfare.com](http://musicalfare.com)  
**Ragtime**, book: Terrence McNally; lyrics: Lynn Ahrens; music: Stephen Flaherty; dir: Randall Kramer. Thru Mar 17.

**The New Group**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [thenewgroup.org](http://thenewgroup.org)  
**"Daddy"**, Jeremy O. Harris; dir: Danya Taymor. Thru Mar 17. Co-production with Vineyard Theatre, NY

**New Light Theater Project**, NYC, [newlighttheaterproject.com](http://newlighttheaterproject.com)  
**The American Tradition**, Ray Yamanouchi; dir: Axel Avin, Jr. Thru Feb 16.

**New York Theatre Workshop**, NYC, (212) 460-5475, [nytw.org](http://nytw.org)  
**Hurricane Diane**, Madeleine George; dir: Leigh Silverman. Feb 6-Mar 10. Co-production with WP Theater, NY

**Phoenix Theatre Ensemble**, NYC, (212) 352-3101, [PhoenixTheatreEnsemble.org](http://PhoenixTheatreEnsemble.org)  
**Cain**, Lord Byron. Feb 24-25.

**Playwrights Horizons**, NYC, (212) 279-4200, [phnyc.org](http://phnyc.org)  
**If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must Be a Muhfucka**, Tori Sampson; dir: Liesl Tommy. Feb 15-Mar 31.

**Road Less Traveled Productions**, Buffalo, (716) 629-3069, [roadlesstraveledproductions.org](http://roadlesstraveledproductions.org)  
**The Illusion**, Tony Kushner; dir: John Hurley. Thru Feb 10.

**Syracuse Stage**, (315) 443-3275, [syracusestage.org](http://syracusestage.org)  
**Native Gardens**, Karen Zacarías; dir: Melissa Crespo. Feb 13-Mar 3. Co-production with Geva Theatre Center, NY

**Theatre for a New Audience**, NYC, (212) 229-2819, [TFANA.org](http://TFANA.org)  
**About ALice**, Calvin Trillin; dir: Leonard Foglia. Thru Feb 3.

● **The Vineyard Theatre**, NYC, (212) 353-0303, [vineyardtheatre.org](http://vineyardtheatre.org)  
**"Daddy"**, Jeremy O. Harris; dir: Danya Taymor. Feb 12-Mar 24. Co-production with the New Group, NY

## NORTH CAROLINA

● **Actor's Theatre of Charlotte**, Charlotte, (704) 342-2251, [atcharlotte.org](http://atcharlotte.org)  
**Nina Simone: Four Women**, Christina Ham; music and lyrics: Nina Simone. Thru Feb 16.

**Burning Coal Theatre Co**, Raleigh, (919) 834-4001, [burningcoal.org](http://burningcoal.org)  
**Ashe in Johannesburg**, Hannah Benitez; dir: Jerome Davis. Jan 24-Feb 10.

● **Cape Fear Regional Theatre**, Fayetteville, (910) 323-4233, [cftrt.org](http://cftrt.org)  
**Annie**, book: Thomas Meehan; lyrics: Martin Charnin; music: Charles Strouse; dir: Robin Levine. Thru Feb 24.

**Children's Theatre of Charlotte**, Charlotte, (704) 973-2828, [ctcharlotte.org](http://ctcharlotte.org)  
**Judy Moody and Stink: The Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Treasure Hunt**, Thru Feb 10.

**PlayMakers Repertory Company**, Chapel Hill, (919) 962-7529, [playmakersrep.org](http://playmakersrep.org)  
**Jump**, Charly Evon Simpson; dir: Whitney White. Thru Feb 10.  
**Life of Galileo**, Bertolt Brecht; music: Justin Ellington; dir: Vivienne Benesch. Feb 27-Mar 17.

● **Triad Stage**, Greensboro, (336) 272-0160, [triadstage.org](http://triadstage.org)  
**White Lightning**, Elyzabeth Gregory Wilder; dir: Sarah Hankins. Thru Feb 17.

## OHIO

**Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park**, (513) 421-3888, [cincyplay.com](http://cincyplay.com)  
**In The Heights**, book: Quiara Alegría Hudes; music and lyrics: Lin-Manuel Miranda; dir: May Adrales. Thru Feb 17. Co-production with Milwaukee Repertory Theater, WI Seattle Repertory Theatre, OR  
**The Last Wide Open**, Audrey Cefaly; dir: Blake Robison. Feb 9-Mar 10.

**Cincinnati Shakespeare Company**, (513) 381-2273, [cincyshakes.com](http://cincyshakes.com)  
 On tour: **A Midsummer Night's Dream**, Shakespeare; dir: Caitlin McWethy. Thru May 26.  
 On tour: **Romeo and Juliet**, Shakespeare; dir: Jeremy Dubin. Thru May 26.  
 On tour: **Julius Caesar**, Shakespeare; dir: Sara Clark. Thru May 26.  
 On tour: **Macbeth**, Shakespeare; dir: Darnell Pierre Benjamin. Thru May 26.  
**Fences**, August Wilson; dir: Christopher V. Edwards. Thru Feb 16.  
**The Winter's Tale**, Shakespeare; dir: Christopher Luscombe. Feb 27-Mar 17.

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**Cleveland Play House**, (216) 241-6000, [clevelandplayhouse.com](http://clevelandplayhouse.com)

**An Iliad**, Denis O'Hare, Lisa Peterson; dir: Andrew Carlson, Tarah Flanagan. Thru Feb 10.

**Ken Ludwig's Sherwood: The Adventures of Robin Hood**, Ken Ludwig; dir: Adam Immerwahr. Feb 2-24.

● **Cleveland Public Theatre**, (216) 631-2727, [cptonline.org](http://cptonline.org)

**Fire on the Water**, Feb 9-Mar 2.

**Dobama Theatre**, Cleveland Heights, (216) 932-3396, [dobama.org](http://dobama.org)

**Revolt. She Said. Revolt Aagain.**, Alice Birch; dir: Sarah Wansley. Thru Feb 17.

● **Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati**, (513) 421-3555, [ensemblecincinnati.org](http://ensemblecincinnati.org)  
**Ripcord**, David Lindsay-Abaire. Thru Feb 16.

**Know Theatre of Cincinnati**, (513) 300-5669, [knowtheatre.com](http://knowtheatre.com)

**Red Bike**, Caridad Svich. Thru Feb 2.

**Always Plenty of Light at the Starlight All Night Diner**, Darcy Parker Bruce; dir: Alice Flanders. Thru Mar 11.

## OKLAHOMA

**CityRep**, Oklahoma City, (405) 848-3761, [cityrep.com](http://cityrep.com)

**Hair**, book: James Rado, Gerome Ragni (also lyrics); lyrics: James Ragni; music: Galt MacDermot; dir: Steven Smeltzer. Feb 6-10. Co-production with University of Central Oklahoma, OK

## OREGON

● **Artists Repertory Theatre**, Portland, (503) 241-1278, [artistsrep.org](http://artistsrep.org)

**Teenage Dick**, Mike Lew; dir: Josh Hecht. Thru Feb 3.

**A Doll's House Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Luan Schooler. Thru Feb 24.

**Broadway Rose Theatre Company**, Tigard, (503) 620-5262, [broadwayrose.org](http://broadwayrose.org)

**Nonsense**, Dan Goggin; dir: Sharon Maroney. Thru Feb 24.

**CoHo Productions**, Portland, (503) 220-2646, [cohoproductions.org](http://cohoproductions.org)

**Pontypool**, adapt: Tony Burgess; dir: Gavin Hoffman. Thru Mar 2.

● **Corrib Theatre**, Portland, [corribtheatre.org](http://corribtheatre.org)  
**Four Last Things**, Lisa Tierney-Keogh; dir: Gemma Whelan. Feb 1-24.

**Oregon Contemporary Theatre**, Eugene, (541) 465-1506, [octheatre.org](http://octheatre.org)

**The Understudy**, Theresa Rebeck; dir: John Schmor. Thru Feb 3.

**Northwest 10: Festival of 10 Minute Plays**, Feb 28-Mar 10.

**Milagro**, Portland, (503) 236-7253, [milagro.org](http://milagro.org)  
**La Sequa**, Alberto Escalante; dir: Roy Aruaz. Feb 7-Mar 2.

**Oregon Children's Theatre**, Portland, (503) 228-9571, [octc.org](http://octc.org)

**Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience**, book and lyrics: Mo Willems; music: Deborah Wicks la Puma; dir: Stan Foote. Thru Feb 17.

**Impulse: OCT's Improvisational Troupe**, dir: Blake Wales. Feb 8-24.

● **Portland Center Stage**, (503) 445-3700, [pcs.org](http://pcs.org)

**Sense & Sensibility**, Kate Hamill; dir: Eric Tucker. Thru Feb 10.

**Buyer & Cellar**, Jonathan Tolins. Thru Mar 3.

**Portland Playhouse**, (503) 488-5822, [portlandplayhouse.org](http://portlandplayhouse.org)

**No Candy**, Emma Stanton; dir: Tea Alagic. Thru Feb 10.

**Profile Theatre**, Portland, (503) 242-0080, [profiletheatre.org](http://profiletheatre.org)

**Ping Chong + Company Commission**, dir: Sarah Zatz. Feb 8-15.

● **Shaking the Tree Theatre**, Portland, (503) 235-0635, <https://shaking-the-tree.com/>  
**Made to Dance in Burning Buildings**, Anya Pearson; dir: Jamie M. Rea. Feb 14-Mar 16.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**1812 Productions**, Philadelphia, (215) 592-9560, [1812productions.org](http://1812productions.org)

**Broads**, dir: Jennifer Childs. Feb 13-24.

**Act II Playhouse**, Ambler, (215) 654-0200, [act2.org](http://act2.org)

**Becoming Dr. Ruth**, Mark St. Germain; dir: Dan O'Neil. Thru Feb 18.

**Arden Theatre Co**, Philadelphia, (215) 922-1122, [ardentheatre.org](http://ardentheatre.org)

**74 Seconds to Judgement**, Kash Goins; dir: Amina Robinson. Thru Mar 3.

**Gem of the Ocean**, August Wilson; dir: James Ijames. Feb 28-Mar 31.

**Azuka Theatre**, Philadelphia, (215) 563-1100, [azukatheatre.org](http://azukatheatre.org)

**Bob: A Life in Five Acts**, Peter Sinn Nachtrieb; dir: Michael Osinski. Feb 27-Mar 17.

● **Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble**, (570) 784-8181, [bte.org](http://bte.org)

**Industrious Angels**, Laurie McCants; dir: Sabrina Hamilton. Thru Feb 3.

● **Bristol Riverside Theatre**, (215) 785-0100, [brtstage.org](http://brtstage.org)

**On Golden Pond**, Ernest Thompson; dir: Susan D. Atkinson. Thru Feb 10.

**City Theatre Company**, Pittsburgh, (412) 431-2489, [citytheatrecompany.org](http://citytheatrecompany.org)  
**Where Did We Sit on the Bus?**, Brian Quijada; dir: Chay Yew. Thru Feb 24.

● **EgoPo Classic Theater**, Philadelphia, (267) 273-1414, [egopo.org](http://egopo.org)

**Three Sisters Two**, Reza de Wet; dir: Brenna Geffers. Thru Feb 17.

**Gamut Theatre Group**, Harrisburg, (717) 238-4111, [gamuttheatre.org](http://gamuttheatre.org)

**All the King's Men**, Robert Penn Warren; dir: J. Clark Nicholson. Feb 16-Mar 3.

**InterAct Theatre Company**, Philadelphia, (215) 568-8079, [interacttheatre.org](http://interacttheatre.org)  
**Hype Man: A Break Beat Play**, Idris Goodwin; dir: LA Williams. Thru Feb 17.

**Lantern Theater Company**, Philadelphia, (215) 829-0395, [lanterntheater.org](http://lanterntheater.org)  
**Betrayal**, Harold Pinter; dir: Kathryn MacMillan. Thru Feb 17.

**Montgomery Theater**, Souderton, (215) 723-9984, [montgomerytheater.org](http://montgomerytheater.org)  
**Buyer and Cellar**, Jonathan Tolins; dir: Tom Quinn. Thru Feb 24.

● **Open Stage of Harrisburg**, Harrisburg, (717) 232-6736, [openstagehbg.com](http://openstagehbg.com)  
**The Wolves**, Sarah DeLappe; dir: Rachel Landon. Feb 16-Mar 3.

● **People's Light**, Malvern, (610) 644-3500, [peopleslight.org](http://peopleslight.org)

**Sweat**, Lynn Nottage; dir: Elena Araoz. Thru Feb 10.

**Nina Simone: Four Women**, Christina Ham; dir: Hayley Finn. Feb 27-Mar 31.

● **Pittsburgh Public Theater**, (412) 316-1600, [ppt.org](http://ppt.org)

**The Tempest**, adapt: Marya Sea Kaminski (also dir) from Shakespeare. Thru Feb 24.

**Quantum Theatre**, Pittsburgh, (412) 362-1713, [quantumtheatre.com](http://quantumtheatre.com)

**The Gun Show**, E.M. Lewis; dir: Sheila McKenna. Feb 8-Mar 3.

**Quintessence Theatre Group**, Philadelphia, (215) 987-4450, [qtgprep.org](http://qtgprep.org)

**Awake and Sing!**, Clifford Odets; dir: Jesse Bernstein. Thru Feb 17.

● **Theatre Exile**, Philadelphia, (215) 218-4022, [theatrexile.org](http://theatrexile.org)  
**An Oak Tree**, Tim Crouch; dir: Joe Canuso. Feb 14-Mar 10.

**Theatre Horizon**, Norristown, (610) 283-2230, [theatrehorizon.org](http://theatrehorizon.org)

**Renaissance in the Belly of a Killer Whale**, Jaylene Clark Owens, Hollis Heath, Janelle Heatley, Chyann Sapp. Feb 23-24.

● **Touchstone Theatre**, Bethlehem, (610) 867-1689, [touchstone.org](http://touchstone.org)  
**Jakopa's Punch Bowl**, Feb 9.

**The Wilma Theater**, Philadelphia, (215) 546-7824, [wilmatheater.org](http://wilmatheater.org)  
**Romeo and Juliet**, Shakespeare; dir: Blanka Zizka. Thru Feb 3.

## RHODE ISLAND

**Gamm Theatre**, Warwick, (401) 723-4266, [gammtheatre.org](http://gammtheatre.org)

**The Night Watch**, adapt: Hattie Naylor; dir: Tony Estrella. Thru Feb 10.

**Escaped Alone**, Caryl Churchill; dir: Tony Estrella. Feb 28-Mar 17.

**Come and Go**, Samuel Beckett; dir: Tony Estrella. Feb 28-Mar 17.

● **Trinity Repertory Co**, Providence, (401) 351-4242, [trinityrep.com](http://trinityrep.com)  
**black odyssey**, Marcus Gardley; dir: Kent Gash. Thru Feb 3.  
**Macbeth**, Shakespeare; dir: Curt Columbus. Thru Mar 3.  
**An Iliad**, Denis O'Hare, Lisa Peterson. Feb 6-10.

**The Wilbury Theatre Group**, Providence, (401) 400-7100, [thewilburygroup.org](http://thewilburygroup.org)  
**The Burn**, Phillip Dawkins; dir: Logan Serabian. Thru Feb 10.  
**Red Bike**, Caridad Svich; dir: Kate Bergstrom. Feb 21-Mar 2.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

● **Arts Center of Coastal Carolina**, Hilton Head, (888) 860-2787, [artshhi.com](http://artshhi.com)  
**Blithe Spirit**, Noel Coward; dir: Russell Treyz. Feb 12-Mar 2.

**Centre Stage**, Greenville, (864) 233-6733, [centrestage.org](http://centrestage.org)

**Shaboom-Shaboom**, Thru Feb 10.  
**Doubt: A Parable**, John Patrick Shanley. Thru Feb 6.

**Charleston Stage**, (843) 577-7183, [charlestonstage.com](http://charlestonstage.com)

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time**, Simon Stephens; dir: Julian Wiles. Feb 6-24.

**Lean Ensemble Theater**, Hilton Head Island, (843) 715-6676, [leanensemble.org](http://leanensemble.org)  
**A Dolls House Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Blake White. Thru Feb 3.

● **PURE Theatre**, Charleston, (843) 723-4444, [puretheatre.org](http://puretheatre.org)  
**Fool For Love**, Sam Shepard. Thru Feb 9.  
**True West**, Sam Shepard. Thru Feb 9.

**Trustus Theatre**, Columbia, (803) 254-9732, [trustus.org](http://trustus.org)

**The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time**, adapt: Simon Stephens; dir: Chad Henderson. Thru Feb 9.

**Love is Love Cabaret**, dir: Chad Henderson. Feb 14-16.

**Cost of Living**, Martyna Majok; dir: Ilene Fins. Feb 22-Mar 2.

**The Village Repertory Co**, Charleston, [villagerep.com](http://villagerep.com)  
**Othello**, Shakespeare; dir: Evan Parry. Thru Feb 9.



**Daddy Long Legs**, adapt: John Caird; music and lyrics: Paul Gordon; dir: Keely Enright. Thru Mar 9.

**The Warehouse Theatre**, Greenville, (864) 235-6948, [warehousetheatre.com](http://warehousetheatre.com)  
**The Glass Menagerie**, Tennessee Williams; dir: Kerrie Seymour. Thru Feb 10.

## TENNESSEE

**Clarence Brown Theatre Co**, Knoxville, (865) 974-5161, [clarencebrowntheatre.org](http://clarencebrowntheatre.org)  
**Alabama Story**, Kenneth Jones; dir: Kate Buckley. Thru Feb 18.  
**King Charles III**, Mike Bartlett; dir: John Sipes. Feb 6-24.

**Detroit '67**, Dominique Morisseau; dir: Lisa Dixon. Feb 27-Mar 17.

**Nashville Repertory Theatre**, (615) 782-4040, [nashvillerep.org](http://nashvillerep.org)

**Topdog/Underdog**, Suzan-Lori Parks; dir: Jon Royal. Feb 7-23.

**Tennessee Women's Theater Project**, Nashville, (615) 681-7220, [twtp.org](http://twtp.org)

**SISTAS: The Musical**, Dorothy Marcic; dir: Maryanna Clarke. Feb 22-Mar 10.

## TEXAS

**4th Wall Theatre Co**, Houston, [4thwalltheatreco.com](http://4thwalltheatreco.com)

**Rapture, Blister, Burn**, Gina Gionfriddo; dir: Kim Tobin-Lehl. Feb 28-Mar 23.

**A. D. Players**, Houston, [adplayers.org](http://adplayers.org)  
**Tuesdays with Morrie**, Mitch Albom, Jeffrey Hatcher; dir: Jennifer Dean. Thru Feb 10.

**Alley Theatre**, Houston, (713) 220-5700, [alleytheatre.org](http://alleytheatre.org)

**The Carpenter**, Robert Askins; dir: Will Davis. Thru Feb 10.

**Quack**, Eliza Clark. Feb 8-Mar 10.

● **Austin Playhouse**, [austinplayhouse.com](http://austinplayhouse.com)  
**Copenhagen**, Michael Frayn; dir: Don Toner. Thru Feb 3.

**Cara Mía Theatre Co**, Dallas, (214) 516-0706, [caramiatheatre.org](http://caramiatheatre.org)

**Bless Me, Ultima**, Rudolfo Anaya; dir: David Lozano. Feb 15-Mar 3.

**The Catastrophic Theatre**, Houston, (713) 521-4533, [catastrophictheatre.com](http://catastrophictheatre.com)  
**Wakey, Wakey**, Will Eno. Thru Feb 3.  
**Bootycandy**, Robert O'Hara. Feb 15-Mar 10.

● **Circle Theatre**, Fort Worth, (817) 877-3040, [circletheatre.com](http://circletheatre.com)

**Our Town**, Thornton Wilder. Thru Mar 9.

● **Dallas Children's Theater**, Dallas, (214) 740-0051, [dct.org](http://dct.org)  
**Ella Enchanted: The Musical**, Karen Zacarias; music: Deborah Wicks La Puma. Thru Feb 24.  
**The Secret Life of Girls**, Linda Daugherty. Feb 15-24.

**Dallas Theater Center**, Dallas, (214) 252-3927, [dallastheatercenter.org](http://dallastheatercenter.org)

**Sweat**, Lynn Nottage; dir: Tim Bond. Thru Feb 10.

● **The Ensemble Theatre Houston**, Houston, (713) 807-4300, [EnsembleHouston.org](http://EnsembleHouston.org)  
**Too Heavy for Your Pocket**, Jireh Breon Holder; dir: Eileen J. Morris. Thru Feb 24.

**Hyde Park Theatre**, Austin, (512) 479-7529, [hydeparktheatre.org](http://hydeparktheatre.org)

**FronteraFest 2019**, Thru Feb 16.

**A Doll's House Part 2**, Lucas Hnath; dir: Ken Webster. Feb 28-Mar 30.

**Kitchen Dog Theater**, Dallas, (214) 953-1055, [kitchendogtheater.org](http://kitchendogtheater.org)

**You Got Older**, Clare Barron; dir: Tina Parker. Feb 14-Mar 10.

**Main Street Theater**, Houston, (713) 524-6706, [mainstreettheater.com](http://mainstreettheater.com)

**The Secretary**, Kyle John Schmidt; dir: Julia Traber. Thru Feb 10.

**Jackie and Me**, Steven Dietz; dir: Vivienne St. John. Thru Feb 17.

● **Mary Moody Northern Theatre**, Austin, (512) 448-8484, [stedwards.edu/theatre](http://stedwards.edu/theatre)  
**The Three Musketeers**, Megan Monaghan Rivas; dir: Michelle Polgar. Feb 14-24.

**Second Thought Theatre**, Dallas, (866) 811-4111, [secondthoughttheatre.com](http://secondthoughttheatre.com)

**Incognito**, Nick Payne; dir: Alex Organ. Thru Feb 23.

● **Stage West Theatre**, Fort Worth, (817) 784-9378, [stagewest.org](http://stagewest.org)  
**Are You Now or Have You Ever Been...**, Carlyle Brown; dir: Vickie Washington. Feb 14-Mar 10.

**Stages Repertory Theatre**, Houston, (713) 527-0123, [stages theatre.com](http://stages theatre.com)

**The River Bride**, Marisela Treviño Orta. Thru Feb 10.

**NSFW**, Lucy Kirkwood. Feb 13-Mar 3.

**Bishop Arts Theatre Center**, Dallas, (214) 948-0716, [bishopartstheatre.org](http://bishopartstheatre.org)

**La Llorona: A Love Story**, Kathleen Anderson Culebro; dir: Adam Adolfo. Feb 7-24.

**Theatre Three**, Dallas, (214) 871-3300, [theatre3dallas.com](http://theatre3dallas.com)

**The Manufactured Myth of Eveline Flynn**, book, music, lyrics: Michael Federico; dir: Kara-Lynn Vaeni. Thru Feb 24.

**Undermain Theatre**, Dallas, (214) 747-5515, [undermain.org](http://undermain.org)

**An Iliad**, Denis O'Hare, Lisa Petersen; dir: Katherine Owens. Feb 7-Mar 3.

**The VORTEX**, Austin, (512) 478-5282, [vortexrep.org](http://vortexrep.org)

**Heartland**, Gabriel Jason Dean; dir: Rudy Ramirez. Thru Feb 9.

**run.**, Ness, Nia. Feb 15-16.

**OUTsider Fest**, Feb 20-24.

**Locus of Control**, Jason Bayani; dir: Kat Evasco. Feb 28-Mar 3.

**WaterTower Theatre**, Addison, (972) 450-6232, [watertowertheatre.org](http://watertowertheatre.org)

**Guadalupe in the Guest Room**, Tony Meneses; dir: Christie Vela. Feb 22-Mar 17.

**ZACH Theatre**, Austin, (512) 476-0541, [zachtheatre.org](http://zachtheatre.org)

**Wake Up, Brother Bear!**, dir: Carolyn Dellinger. Thru Apr 21.

**Hedwig and the Angry Inch**, book: James Cameron Mitchell; music and lyrics: Steven Trask; dir: Kevin Cahoon. Thru Mar 3.

**Notes From the Field**, Anna Deavere Smith; music: Marcus Shelby; dir: Dave Steakley. Feb 27-Mar 31.

## UTAH

**Salt Lake Acting Company**, Salt Lake City, (801) 363-7522, [saltlakeactingcompany.org](http://saltlakeactingcompany.org)

**The Cake**, Bekah Brunstetter; dir: Justin Ivie. Feb 6-Mar 10.

## VERMONT

**Northern Stage**, White River Junction, (802) 296-7000, [northernstage.org](http://northernstage.org)

**Venus Rising**, Marisa Smith. Thru Feb 17.

**Buyer & Cellar**, Jonathan Tolins. Feb 27-Mar 17.

**Vermont Stage**, Burlington, (802) 863-5966, [vermontstage.org](http://vermontstage.org)

**A Doll's House, Part 2**, Lucas Hnath. Thru Feb 10.

## VIRGIN ISLANDS

**Pistarckle Theater**, St. Thomas, [pistarckletheater.com](http://pistarckletheater.com)

**Evita**, lyrics: Tim Rice; music: Andrew Lloyd Webber; dir: Francis Bartolucci. Feb 14-Mar 2.

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## VIRGINIA

● **1st Stage**, Tysons, [1ststagetysons.org](http://1ststagetysons.org)  
**The Brothers Size**, Tarell Alvin McCraney;  
 dir: Jose Carrasquillo. Thru Feb 24.

**American Shakespeare Center**, (540) 851-1733,  
[americanshakespearecenter.com](http://americanshakespearecenter.com)

**The Merry Wives of Windsor**, Shakespeare.  
 Thru Apr 13.

**Henry IV, Part 1**, Shakespeare. Thru Apr 11.

**Anne Page Hates Fun**, Amy E. Witting.  
 Feb 7-Apr 14.

**The Belle's Stratagem**, Hannah Cowley.  
 Feb 28-Apr 13.

**Cadence Theatre Company**, Richmond,  
[cadencetheatre.org](http://cadencetheatre.org)

**In My Chair**, Eva DeVirgili; dir: Lisa Rothe.  
 Feb 28-Mar 24. Co-production with Virginia  
 Repertory Theatre, VA

**Firehouse Theatre**, Richmond, (804) 355-2001,  
[firehousetheatre.org](http://firehousetheatre.org)

**River City Vaudeville**, Thru Apr 14.

**Burlesque Right Meow**, Thru Apr 28.

**Gospel Oedipus**, adapt: Vinnie Gonzalez (also dir)  
 from Sophocles. Feb 1-Mar 10.

**Kennedy Center - Theater for Young  
 Audiences**, Arlington, (202) 467-4600,  
[kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org)

**Broadway Center Stage: The Music Man**,  
 book: Meredith Wilson. Feb 6-10.

**She a Gem- Performance for Young Audiences**,  
 Josh Wilder. Feb 15-24.

**Virginia Repertory Theatre**, Richmond,  
 (804) 282-2620, [virginiarep.org](http://virginiarep.org)

**Once**, book: Enda Walsh; music and lyrics: Glen  
 Hansard, Markéta Irglová. Feb 8-Mar 3.

**Virginia Stage Company**, Norfolk,  
 (757) 627-1234, [vastage.org](http://vastage.org)

**Fun Home**, Alison Bechdel, Lisa Kron, Jeanine  
 Tesori. Thru Feb 10.

● **WSC Avant Bard**, Arlington, (703) 418-4808,  
[avantbard.org](http://avantbard.org)

**Scripts in Play Free Reading Festival**,  
 Feb 7-24.

## WASHINGTON

**The 5th Avenue Theatre**, Seattle,  
 (206) 625-1900, [5thavenue.org](http://5thavenue.org)

**Rock of Ages**, book: Chris D'Arienzo;  
 dir: Lisa Shriver. Feb 1-24.

**ARTSWEST**, Seattle, (206) 938-0339,  
[artswest.org](http://artswest.org)

**M. Butterfly**, David Henry Hwang.  
 Thru Feb 17.

● **Harlequin Productions**, Olympia,  
 (360) 786-0151, [harlequinproductions.org](http://harlequinproductions.org)

**I Ought To Be In Pictures**, Neil Simon.  
 Thru Feb 9.

**The Women**, Clare Booth Luce. Feb 28-Mar 23.

**Seattle Children's Theatre**, (206) 441-3322,  
[sct.org](http://sct.org)

**The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane**,  
 adapt: Dwayne Hartford; dir: Courtney Sale.  
 Thru Mar 10.

**Seattle Repertory Theatre**, (206) 443-2222,  
[seattlerep.org](http://seattlerep.org)

**Last of the Boys**, Steven Dietz; dir: Braden  
 Abraham. Thru Feb 10.

**The Woman in Black**, adapt: Stephen Mallatratt;  
 dir: Robin Herford. Feb 22-Mar 24.

**Taproot Theatre Company**, Seattle,  
 (206) 781-9707, [taproottheatre.org](http://taproottheatre.org)

**Arsenic and Old Lace**, Joseph Kesselring.  
 Thru Mar 2.

## WISCONSIN

● **Forward Theater Company**, Madison,  
 (608) 258-4141, [forwardtheater.com](http://forwardtheater.com)

**Heisenberg**, Simon Stephens; dir: Laura Gordon.  
 Thru Feb 3.

**Milwaukee Chamber Theatre**, (414) 291-7800,  
[milwaukeechambertheatre.com](http://milwaukeechambertheatre.com)

**Strange Snow**, Stephen Metcalfe; dir: C. Michael  
 Wright. Feb 22-Mar 17.

● **Milwaukee Repertory Theater**,  
 (414) 224-9490, [milwaukeerep.com](http://milwaukeerep.com)

**Junk**, Ayad Akhtar; dir: Mark Clements.  
 Thru Feb 17.

**Mark Twain's River of Song**, Randal Myler (also  
 dir), Dan Wheetman. Thru Mar 17.

**The Chinese Lady**, Lloyd Suh; dir: May Adrales.  
 Feb 13-Mar 24.

**Next Act Theatre**, Milwaukee, (414) 278-0765,  
[nextact.org](http://nextact.org)

**Blood at the Root**, Dominique Morisseau.  
 Thru Feb 24.

**Third Avenue Playhouse**, Sturgeon Bay,  
 (920) 743-1760, [thirdavenueplayhouse.com](http://thirdavenueplayhouse.com)

**Winter Play Reading Series**, Feb 1-10.

## WYOMING

**Off Square Theatre Company**, Jackson,  
 (307) 733-4900, [offsquare.org](http://offsquare.org)

**The Addams Family School Edition**,  
 book: Marshall Brickman, Rick Elice; music  
 and lyrics: Andrew Lippa; dir: Nicole Madison  
 Garrett. Feb 22-23.

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## PREVIEW COMING MARCH19



ALLEN WEEKS

## BLACK STAGE

It's not just cinema that is having a much-ballyhooed Black moment. Theatres across the U.S. are staging a wider array than ever of plays reflecting varied experiences of the African American diaspora (and not only in February). But are Black-run institutions faring as well as some individual artists, and getting the credit and funding they deserve for building audiences and careers? This issue will look at the state of Black arts onstage from creative, business, and justice angles.

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:** What the current turnover trend in U.S. theatres' artistic leadership means and promises; the nation's notoriously white improv scene takes steps to diversify; Tatiana Maslany on media, feminism, and *Network*



## CONVERSATIONS

## on Facebook

Reactions to "The Kids Are All Right," our January 2019 piece on students studying arts management:

**JESSICA RUTH BAKER:** I am currently pursuing a Master's in nonprofit management at the University of Oregon, and we just recently rolled out an additional Certificate in arts management. I'm glad to be getting the nonprofit degree instead of an arts management degree, because I've been able to take classes in financial management and policymaking, and I'm in classes with environmentalists and community advocates. We also have a unique opportunity to serve on a local nonprofit board for a year, with guidance and resources provided by a local expert. This diversity of experience has given me a lot to learn from and take into the theatre world when I graduate. I'm so proud to be a part of this new generation of administrators, and to see where we take theatre next!

**RENA CROMER:** I love that *American Theatre* magazine is covering this topic again because the last time they did was 2007. It was time for an update on this all-important matter in theatre. I appreciate the list of masters programs but I would love for you guys to do a list of online masters programs for those of us already working in the field and can't stop our lives to move to a campus. Thank you.

**LORI ALEIXO HOWARD:** I took one (just one) class in regional theatre management in college (because that's all that was offered) but honestly, that one course is what was most useful by far for my career. Glad to see that offerings have grown so much since my college days!

Like us at [facebook.com/AT.magazine](https://facebook.com/AT.magazine).

## on Twitter

Reactions to our January 2019 issue on arts management training.

**@JMJAArtist:** ♥ I love my profession! ♥ making visual or performing arts happen!

**@BexMarch:** So refreshing to hear from practitioners like myself enabling and fostering the work. Whether artist or administrator, each is integral and worth the ink.

**@Nesheaholic:** Yes! The arts admins make the art possible.

**@Crrritic:** @AmericanTheatre I'm resistant to the notion that administrators "just make art possible." In fact, administration and producing, when done correctly, are art forms that keep red tape out of the way of the artistic process

Follow us at [twitter.com/AmericanTheatre](https://twitter.com/AmericanTheatre).

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

## THE NEW TCG CIRCLE



Visit [circle.tcg.org](https://circle.tcg.org) to see TCG's new online tool connecting theatre people with the resources and relationships they need.

## 2019 TCG NATIONAL CONFERENCE:

# MIAMI

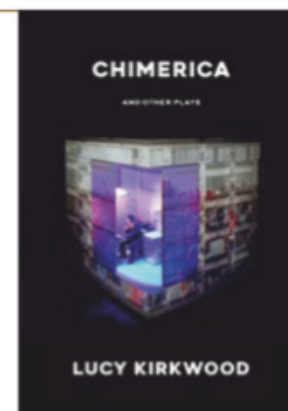
Visit [circle.tcg.org/TCG19](https://circle.tcg.org/TCG19) to check out the special website for 2019 TCG National Conference: Miami, which will be held June 5-7, 2019.

## THEATRE FACTS

TCG has released the latest version of its in-depth report examining the fiscal state of the theatre field. Get your facts straight at [tcg.org/ResearchAndResources/TheatreFacts.aspx](https://tcg.org/ResearchAndResources/TheatreFacts.aspx).

NEW FROM  
TCG BOOKS

Now available: *Chimerica and Other Plays* by Lucy Kirkwood. As one of Britain's leading young playwrights, Kirkwood writes plays infused with a sharp wit and a fierce intelligence, taking an unflinching look at the issues affecting our world today. This collection gathers together five of her plays: *Chimerica*, *Tinderbox*, *it felt empty when the heart went at first but it is alright now*, *small hours*, and *NSFW*. Order your copy at [tcg.org/TCGBookstore.aspx](https://tcg.org/TCGBookstore.aspx).



## ONSTAGE/THEATRE PROFILES

Up-to-date schedules of TCG theatres from coast to coast. **PLUS:** details about production venues, designers and choreographers, artistic leader statements, and general information about each theatre at [tcg.org/profiles](https://tcg.org/profiles).

Michael Marotta and Susan Haefner in *Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical* at Florida Repertory Theatre in Fort Meyers, Fla.

JOE DAFELDECKER



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Composed of leading trustees from member theatres across the country, the National Council for the American Theatre guides TCG's programs on governance and board development, and serves as a "brain trust" for the organization.

For information on joining the National Council, please contact **Adrian Budhu**, *Deputy Director and COO*: [abudhu@tcg.org](mailto:abudhu@tcg.org).

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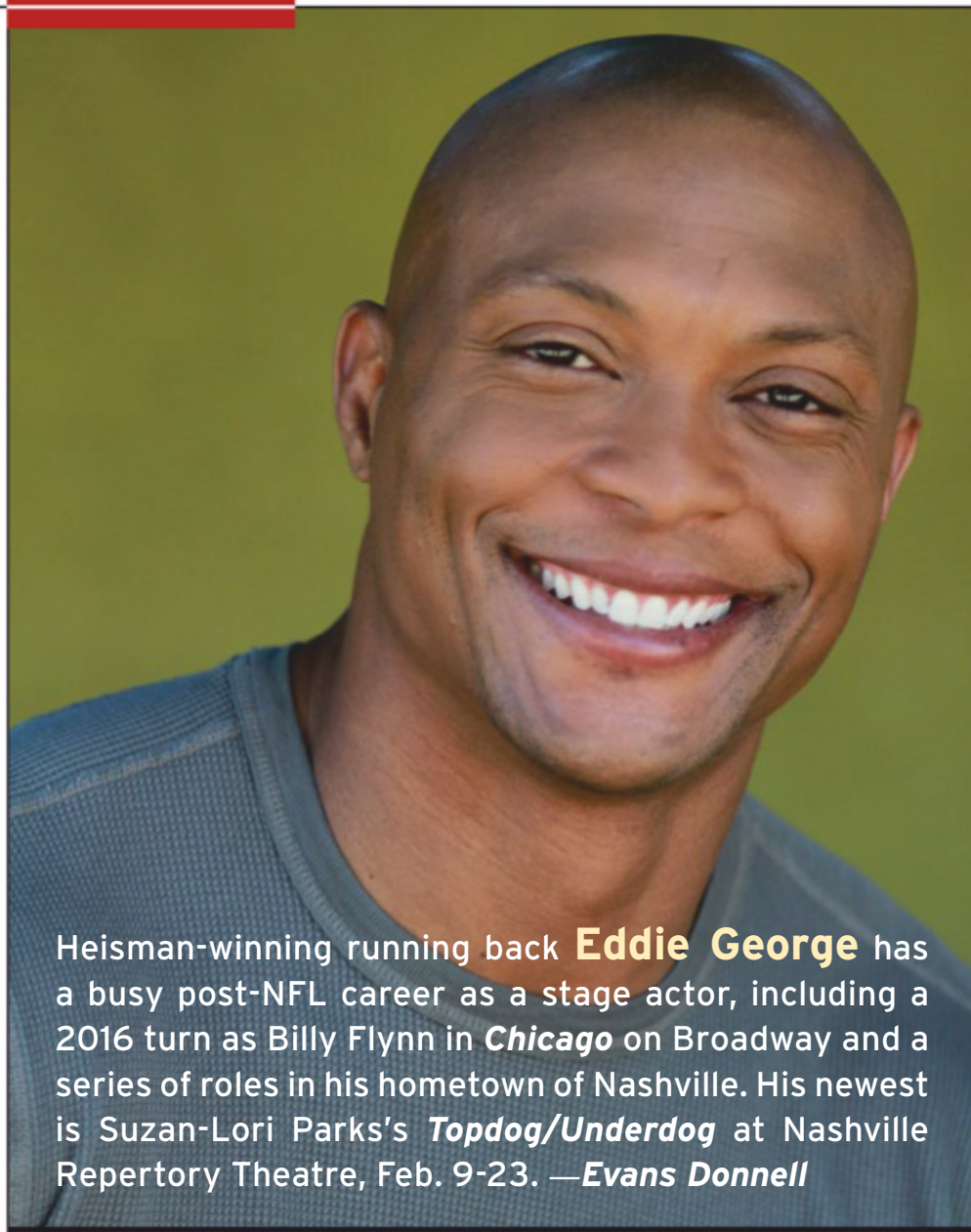
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A BETTER WORLD FOR THEATRE.  
A BETTER WORLD **BECAUSE** OF THEATRE.





Heisman-winning running back **Eddie George** has a busy post-NFL career as a stage actor, including a 2016 turn as Billy Flynn in *Chicago* on Broadway and a series of roles in his hometown of Nashville. His newest is Suzan-Lori Parks's *Topdog/Underdog* at Nashville Repertory Theatre, Feb. 9-23. —*Evans Donnell*

**You played Booth in the 2010 production of *Topdog/Underdog* at Nashville's Amun Ra Theatre, opposite your friend and mentor Jeff Obafemi Carr. What's it like to revisit the play now, in the role of Lincoln, the older brother, opposite Joel Diggs as Booth?**

It's like revisiting an old friend from a different perspective. I'm not coming to it from a sense of newness. I have some experience under my belt now. I feel I've matured as a man to bring something different to the character. This was a play that I had my eyes on. Once I got into more theatrical pieces, I definitely wanted to redo it and try Lincoln. It's a piece which requires you to rely on your past and to play the subtleties of a human being and show the different sides of him and the torment that he suffers from a quiet place.

**Suzan-Lori Parks has said her play is about "what it means to be family. And then in the biggest sense, the family of man. What it means to be connected with somebody else...[and] who the world thinks you're going to be and how you struggle with that." Are those themes in your mind as you perform the piece?**

First and foremost, I go back to what the script says about Lincoln, what the other characters say about him, what he says about himself. It's truly a story of perseverance, and one where you're really trying to become something different, aspire to be something different. Then, when you're slapped down with adversity, how do you handle that monster? And does it crush your dreams to the point where you don't want to function anymore?

***Topdog/Underdog* is a pretty grueling two-hander, and your Othello for National Shakespeare Festival certainly required a great deal of energy. How much does your athletic and fitness background aid you in performing such roles night after night?**

Man, that's a great question. It helps me out tremendously, because you must have the stamina. It takes a lot out of your body. You use your body, your spirit, your entire being to allow that energy to come out, and you're exhausted by the end of the play if you are willing to go places it requires you to go.

So yes, having the experience of playing [football] and understanding that there's four quarters to every game and not to go all out in the first half and have nothing left, having no place to go—it's just understanding the beginning, middle, end, and allowing it to build, and to show bits and pieces, just windows, small windows of where the character is headed and what he has inside of him. And allowing that to breathe, if that makes sense. My athletic background plays a huge part in that.


**You've done a wide range of roles in the last decade plus, from Shakespearean tragedies and classical and contemporary American plays to your Broadway turn in the musical *Chicago*. Has that wide range been by design?**

No! [*Laughs*] I wish I could take credit. I just go from one opportunity to the next based on what speaks to my spirit that particular season. I tend to gravitate toward roles that kind of scare me, that'll push me both as a person and as an actor, that force me to stretch and really hone my acting chops.

**As I recall, you took Saturday classes at the New Freedom Theatre in Philadelphia as a kid. Was that where the acting seed was planted? And how does that early training influence you now?**

It was something I didn't embrace then. I wanted to be in the streets. I wanted to play football. I wanted to ride my bike. I wanted to play basketball. I didn't want to be in a theatre on an early Saturday morning. And I had no idea that I would get into it. I give all the credit to my mother for pushing me in that avenue. It was by no means something I wanted to do, but she put me in that environment, so if that ever came up again, I could rely on that and say, "Hey, this is something I love to do."

**One of your earliest roles was in the film *The Game Plan*. What's your game plan for the future when it comes to acting?**

To be open to all the possibilities. The No. 1 thing is to be a service and to bring a light or awareness to a situation or bring healing to someone, because the arts are meant to heal and to inspire people to think beyond what they think are their limitations. The beautiful thing about acting is you can be anything you want to be. 



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